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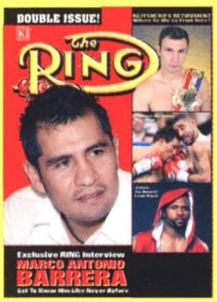

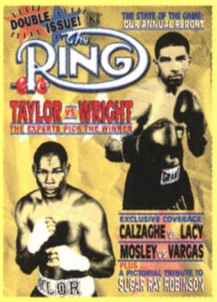

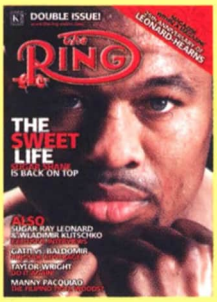

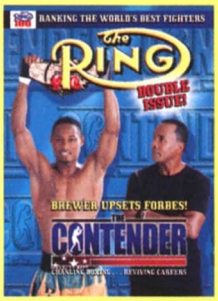

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Vol. III, 2005: Cover Story: Glen Johnson—Fighter of the Year. **Bonus Issue:** The Year In Pictures. **Also Inside:** Year-end awards, Vitali Klitschko, Jermain Taylor & Jeff Lacy.

Vol. IV, 2005: Cover Story: 20 At 40: How Much More Can Hopkins Accomplish Before 41? **Magazine Within A Magazine:** 20 Years Later: Hagler vs. Hearns Revisited. **Also Inside:** Trinidad-Wright preview, Hasim Rahman, Tszyu-Hatton preview, Larios-McCullough, Max Schmeling.

Vol. V, 2005: Cover Story: "Pretty Boy" Floyd: Just As Great As He Says He Is … Maybe Even Better. **Bonus Section:** The Pound-For-Pound Elite. **Also Inside:** Tarver-Jones II, Mike Tyson, quitters.

Vol. VI, 2005: Cover Story: Hopkins vs. Taylor II: 10 Crucial Questions Surrounding The Middleweight Championship. **Magazine Within A Magazine:** Tribute To Rocky Marciano. **Also Inside:** Raheem-Morales, Judah & Mayweather, Brian Viloria, *Box Like The Pros* book excerpt.

March 2006: Cover Story: Exclusive *Ring* Interview: Marco Antonio Barrera. **Bonus Section:** The 10 Fights We'd Like To See. **Also Inside:** Vitali Klitschko, *The Contender,* Roy Jones, Pongsaklek Wonjongkam, Nigel Benn.

May 2006: Cover Story: Forget Judah! It's Time To Bring Hatton And Mayweather Together! **Magazine Within A Magazine:** The Year In Pictures. **Also Inside:** Nicolay Valuev, Ray Mancini, top 10 trainers.

July 2006: Cover Story: Taylor vs. Wright: The Experts Pick The Winner. **Bonus Section:** The State of the Game. **Also Inside:** Joe Calzaghe, Mosley-Vargas, Emanuel Augustus, Tony DeMarco, Sugar Ray Robinson.

September 2006: Gold Standard! Oscar's Brilliant Performance A Matchmaker's Dream. **Bonus Section:** *The Contender,* Season 2. **Also Inside:** Ricky Hatton, Wladimir Klitschko, Lou DiBella, Floyd Patterson.

November 2006: The Sweet Life: Sugar Shane Is Back On Top. **Magazine Within A Magazine:** The 25th Anniversary Of Leonard-Hearns. **Also Inside:** Wladmir Klitschko, Baldomir-Gatti, Taylor-Wright, Manny Pacquiao, Jose Luis Castillo, Chris Eubank.

January 2007: *The Contender:* Changing Boxing … Reviving Careers. Bonus Section: The Ring 100. **Also Inside:** Barrera-Juarez II, W. Klitschko-Brock preview, Edwin Valero, Clinton Woods, Mustafa Hamsho, psychological warfare.

March 2007: Best In The World? Pac-Man's Closing In On Pretty Boy. **Bonus Section**: The Ring's Fights of the Year: 1945-2005. **Also Inside:** Mayweather-Baldomir, Wladimir Klitschko, Peter Manfredo Jr., The Ring Interview: Bernard Hopkins.

May 2007: Samuel Peter: Is The Nigerian Nightmare The Heavyweight Of Our Dreams? **Magazine Within A Magazine:** The Year In Pictures. **Also Inside:** Ricky Hatton, De La Hoya-Mayweather preview, fitness gurus.

July 2007: Can Zab Judah Help Us Solve The Mystery Of Miguel Cotto? **Bonus Section:** The State of the Game. **Also Inside:** J.M. Marquez-Barrera, Rafael Marquez, Manny Pacquiao, Morrison & Mesi comebacks, Joe Louis, boxing's wild men, Canada.

September 2007: All-Star Report Cards: **Also Inside:** Kelly Pavlik, Roy Jones, Floyd Mayweather, Diaz-Freitas, Gatti & Ward, Bite Fite, George Chuvalo, Pac-Man vs. all-time greats.

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December 2007: Calzaghe-Kessler, Hatton-Mayweather—Britain Puts Its Best Fists Forward. **Also Inside:** Erik Morales, Vazquez-Marquez, Nick Katsidis, Joey Gamache, *The Contender,* welterweights, home town fighters.

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Aug. 1988: Tyson vs. Spinks: Preview & Analysis Of Superfight '88. Also: Haugen-Santana, Roger Mayweather, Julio Cesar Chavez, superfights.

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May 1989: Will Tyson Survive 1989? A BOXING 89 Debate. Also: Frank Bruno, Evander Holyfield, Willem Dafoe.

July 1989: Born Again ... Again: Duran Conquers Barkley. Also: Tyson-Bruno, Olympians, Tommy Gallagher, Chavez-Mayweather preview.

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Jan. 1990: Who Should Tyson Fight: Evander Holyfield Or George Foreman? Also: Pernell Whitaker, Felt Forum, Ross Greenburg, Leonard-Duran preview.

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March 1991: Who Will Survive In 1991? Also: Holyfield-Douglas, Nunn-Curry, Buddy McGirt, Jess Willard, Nelson-Fenech preview.

May 1991: The Heavyweight Division: Alive And Punching. Also: Simon Brown, Marcos Villasana, Year That Was: 1964, Gene Tunney, Chavez-Taylor preview.

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Jan. 1992: The Holyfield-Tyson Showdown: The 10 Most Critical Questions Of Superfight '91. Also: Riddick Bowe, Great Western Forum, Bobby Czyz.

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May 1994: Roberto Duran At 100!! (Fights, Not Years). Also: Carbajal-Gonzalez II preview, Kelley-Vargas, Bruce Trampler, People's Choice Heavyweight Tournament.

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May 1995: '95 Alive! The 10 Fights We'd Like To See. Also: Roy Jones, Bob Lee, Bobby Crabtree, Owen Moran, Vasquez-Whitaker preview.

July 1995: Tyson-The Five Men He Should Fight ... And The Five He Should Avoid. Also: Benn-McClellan, Holyfield-Mercer preview, Arnie Rosenthal.

Jan. 1996: Holyfield Answers The Tough Questions. Also: Wayne McCullough, puncher vs. puncher, Paul Vaden, pay-per-view.

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[Opening Shot]

Thank God It's Friday?

New Zealand heavyweight Shane Cameron certainly didn't share that sentiment in November when he ended up in this condition after facing American Friday Ahunanya at the Sky City Convention Centre in Auckland. Cameron was severely cut around the eyes early in the fight and still managed to hold a lead until he was kayoed by his former sparring partner in the 12th round. Cameron, who was 19-0 coming into the fight, was seeking a top-10 IBF rating and a chance to come to the U.S. and earn some substantial money. Now he and his team are seeking the advice of medical professionals in an attempt to toughen his skin and prevent him from once again appearing in the "Opening Shot."

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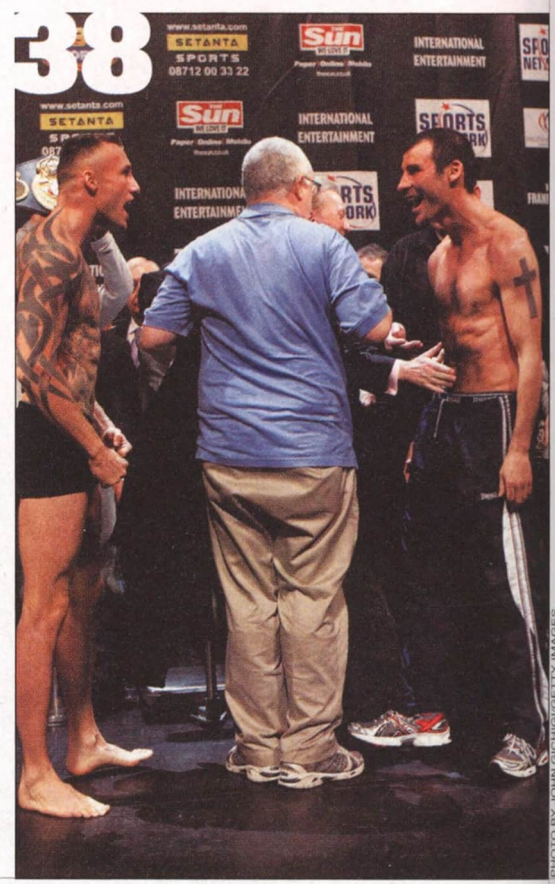

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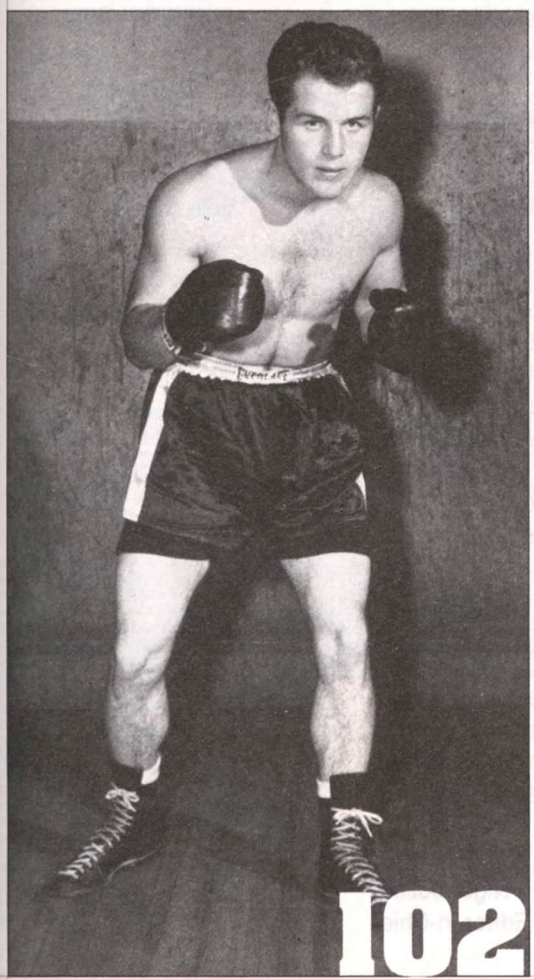

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The RING

We all know that boxing's meatgrinder chews up its participants and spits them out broken people. But we tuck the knowledge away in some faraway compartment and try to forget about it. Every now and then, however, there's no escaping the truth. It jumps out of that secret place and socks you in the heart. So it was for me when Fernando Vargas lost his farewell fight to Ricardo Mayorga.

The Vargas who fought Mayorga bore little resemblance to the 19-year-old kid who took the IBF junior middleweight title from Yory Boy Campas in December 1998. Hell, the Vargas who fought Mayorga bore little resemblance to the one who weighed in the day before and then flexed for the cameras. By the time he climbed into the ring at the Staples Center, Vargas had packed on so many pounds it looked like he'd swallowed a heavybag.

Even so, he fought valiantly in defeat and gave the 10,365 fans in attendance and the approximately 300,000 pay-per-view customers their money's worth. He was "El Feroz" right up until the final bell, fighting as hard as he could for as long as he could. That he is nowhere near the fighter he was in his prime did not diminish his effort one bit—or cost him a single fan

Afterward, you could tell how much Vargas had given, both that night and throughout his career. He looked at least 10 years older than his chronological age (29) and spoke in a raspy whisper, sounding a lot like Marlon Brando in *The Godfather*. The marks of battle on his face were insignificant compared to the sadness in his eyes.

The time between the night in Atlantic City when Fernando won his first belt and the last hurrah in Los Angeles rushed past too quickly. It seems like only yesterday that he stood at the podium after beating Campas, his young son in his arms, looking into a future where nothing seemed impossible.

Now, it's over and time for the reckoning. Fortunately, Vargas has supposedly invested his money wisely, and if that's true, maybe my melancholy is misplaced. Campas is still on the club circuit, soaking up the punches.

There is, of course, more than one way to fall from grace in boxing. The week before Mayorga sent Vargas into retirement, Larry Hazzard was fired from his job as commissioner of New Jersey's State Athletic Control Board, a post he had held with distinction for nearly 22 years.

Hazzard's fate was hatched in the Machiavellian halls of state government, and a civil servant sitting behind a desk delivered the knockout punch. Vargas engineered his own exit and took his lumps in public, but at least he had a fighting chance. Hazzard was toast the minute New Jersey Attorney General Anne Milgram decided it was "time for a change."

But the arbitrary nature of Hazzard's dismissal notwithstanding, anybody who watched Larry's cat-like movement in the ring during his years as a world-class referee knows he'll land on his feet. I'm not so sure about Vargas.

♦♦♦

In the yin to Vargas' yang, I must admit I was happy for Mayorga. Somewhere underneath all the bravado and obscenity there remains the vestige of the barefoot boy who had to fight for survival on the mean streets of Managua, a hint of humanity beneath the petulant armor. No guy who always brings his mother to his fights can be totally bad. Besides, the guy in the black hat has to win occasionally, or he losses his menace. Then where would we be?

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Hooray . . . George Foreman enjoys fans along parade route.

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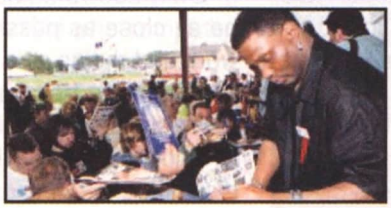
Hall of Fame referee Arthur Mercante signs his autobiography for the fans.

MUSEUM GROUNDS



Autographs . . . "Sweet Pea" Pernell Whitaker spends time signing autographs on the Museum grounds.

5K RACE, FUN RUN

Finish Line . . . "Irish" Micky Ward in stride.

Go . . . Ken Norton officially starts race of celebrity boxers and runners.

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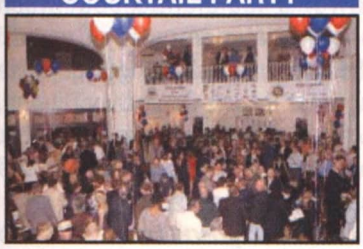
Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

COCKTAIL PARTY

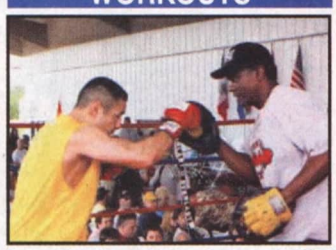


Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM

Ricardo Lopez points to his championship trunks.

WORKOUTS



Oscar Diaz works the bag mitts with Tommy Brooks during public workout.

RINGSIDE TALKS

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Sparkle Shines In HBO Debut

Sparkle Lee never set out to be a pioneer. She doesn't want to be treated differently than any other referee in the sport. Still, Lee can understand the curiosity.

Women continue to break new ground, but one area that has gone largely unchallenged is "the third man in the ring." As with many other sports, female referees in boxing are as common as red diamonds. Lee is one of just a few out there.

The recently retired New York City police officer got her biggest assignment so far on November 17, when she ably handled bantamweight prospect Abner Mares' HBO-televised 12-round win over Damian Marchiano at the Borgata in Atlantic City. In August, Lee became the first female to referee a fight in New Jersey when she oversaw Nasser Athumani's fourth-round kayo of Juan Urango.

It's a dream-come-true for Lee, who was a regular at Atlantic City fights as a young girl. She was a USA Boxing official for more than a decade before becoming the first female to ref a New York Golden Gloves fight in 1998. Three years later, Lee became the first female referee appointed by the New York State Athletic Commission. She mostly handled female fights and amateur bouts until finally getting approved by the New Jersey Commission last summer.

"I have real good faith," said Lee, a devout Baptist. "I just always felt it would happen. I didn't know when, but I knew it would happen."

Small but feisty, Lee first became involved in the sport back in the early-1980s when she discovered the White Collar Boxing program at Gleason's Gym. She had to give up any hopes she had of fighting competitively in 1987, though, when she joined the NYPD.

Still, Lee remained a boxing addict who wanted to be as close as possible to the ring. So when her police work and duties as a mother of three prevented her from fighting, she became a judge in New York. Lee soon realized that she wanted to referee. She said officials tried to discourage her—"in a nice way"—but Lee couldn't be dissuaded.

In her first fight, she struggled to maintain control of a pair of wild 165-pound amateurs who ignored her instructions. "It was just crazy," Lee said. "It was something new for me. They were just out of control. They weren't paying me no mind. It was a total disrespect."

She handled that setback the way a strong-willed fighter would handle a disappointing bout. "It didn't happen again," Lee said. "You learn from every fight. I'm the worst person on myself. I always look at something I could have done better."

In 1998, California's Gwen Adair became the first woman to ref a major title bout when she officiated Yory Boy Campas' IBF junior middleweight defense against Pedro Ortega in Tijuana, Mexico. Lee would like to add her name to that short list, but she said it's not her top priority.

"It really doesn't matter to me," Lee said of working a world title fight. "I just like to work. If it happens, it happens. I'm cool with the club shows. I just want to work. You have to start somewhere. The smaller fights are just as important as the big ones to me."

—Don Stewart

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Lee raises Mares' arm in victory

Hazzard Ousted In Political Coup

To some he was a no-nonsense boxing commissioner who protected fighters; to others he was an abrasive character who courted controversy.

Regardless of where you stood during Larry Hazzard's 22-year stint as commissioner of New Jersey's State Athletic Control Board, his recent firing was a shock to most in the boxing industry.

"I'm not the type of guy who makes a lot of friends in government," Hazzard told THE RING. Hazzard acknowledged that having "a certain type of personality" might have been his undoing. "I make noise," he said.

According to Keith Idec of the North Jersey *Herald News*, the incident that lead to Hazzard's removal took place three weeks earlier. It involved a letter Hazzard and his attorney, James J. Binns, sent to Governor Jon S. Corzine, "alerting Corzine of neglect by unnamed SACB employees that had jeopardized the health and safety of boxers and mixed martial artists who competed in the state."

Hazzard's key complaint involved the 1999 ring death of Stephan Johnson, a fighter whose brain abnormalities went unnoticed by SACB employees examining Johnson's prefight CT scan. Hazzard's letter accused promoters of shopping around for doctors who would clear unsound fighters. Hazzard was also outspoken about what he considered a "hostile work environment" at the SACB's Trenton office.

Instead of being granted a meeting with Corzine, Hazzard was fired. He was notified after returning from the funeral of his 41-year-old nephew.

A spokesman for Attorney General Anne Milgram said that Hazzard had done nothing wrong, and that it was merely time for a change. Considering Hazzard's impeccable reputation, Milgram's statement has been ridiculed in boxing circles.

One of boxing's steadfast images of the past two decades was of the stone-faced Hazzard sitting ringside for New Jersey bouts. Presiding like a tribal chief, Hazzard's foremost concern was always fighter safety. During his days as a referee, Hazzard was known for stopping fights early. Even in his role as commissioner he would barrel through the ropes when a fighter was hurt, as he did most recently during the Alfonso Gomez-Arturo Gatti bout.

Hazzard never hesitated to tangle with people in power. He granted a boxing license to Mike Tyson in 2004, opposing the wishes of then Governor James McGreevey. Hazzard was also critical of Gerald Gormley, the former chairman of the SACB who had no boxing background but happened to be the brother of Senator William Gormley. Hazzard, in a 2004 lawsuit filed in state Superior Court, claimed he was unfairly blamed for a decrease in boxing in the state and a related loss of revenue, and that Gormley diminished his influence. The crux of Hazzard's suit was racial bias; Hazzard is black, the Gormleys are white. Both McGreevy and Gormley resigned from their posts amid scandal. Gormley was also ordered to repay $14,000 to various promoters for receiving unnecessary SACB credentials for family members and friends.

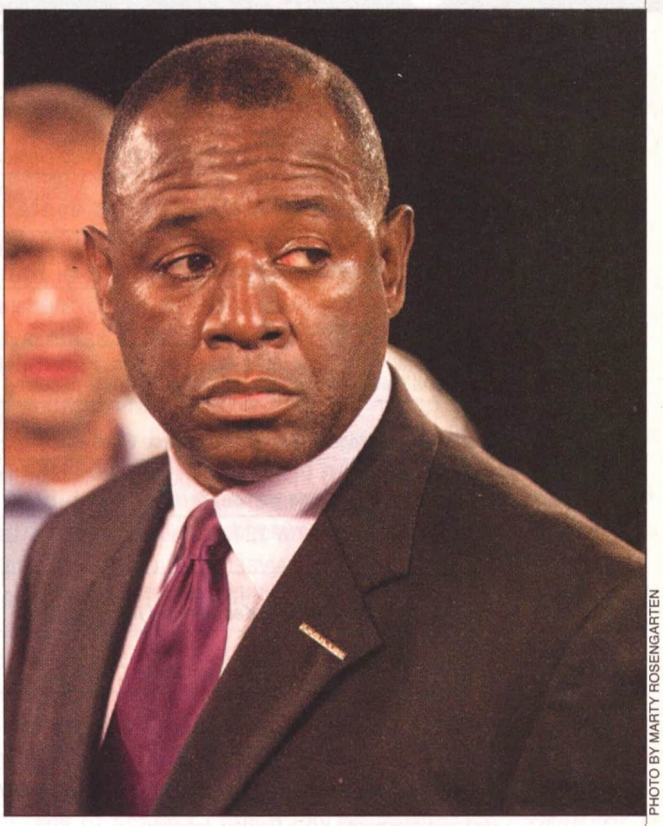


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Hazzard is fired after 22 years on New Jersey commission

Hazzard, 62, feels his dismissal was "a retaliation" by lingering members of past administrations. No replacement has been named, although deputy commissioner Sylvester Cuyler will be acting commissioner in the meantime.

Not all are upset. New Jersey promoter Gabe LaConte told the New Jersey *Star Ledger* that Hazzard had stifled boxing in the state. "Change was necessary," said LaConte. "Long overdue really." Veteran referee Frank Cappuccino told the *Philadelphia Daily News*, "He played favorites. You had to kiss his ass."

But if some are glad Hazzard is gone, many others in the business feel Hazzard was wronged, including light heavyweight champion Bernard Hopkins. "I am shocked and appalled," said Hopkins. "I encourage all members of the boxing community—fighters, trainers, judges, promoters, commissioners, television networks, and the media—to join me in protesting this decision."

Hazzard doesn't anticipate being reinstated. "Most government people don't know boxing," he said. "If this was the boxing community making decisions, I might still be there.

—Don Stradley

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

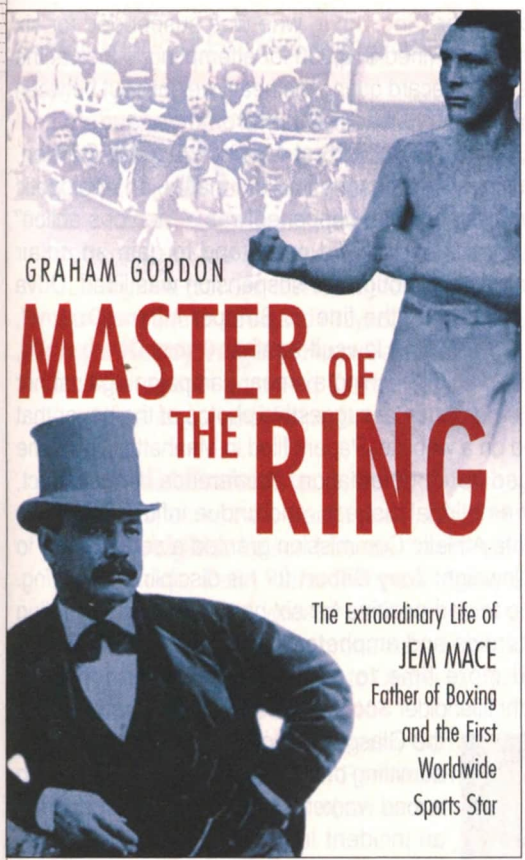
DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
10/16/07	Alfonso Gomez W 10 Ben Tackie	ESPN	w	B-	C+	C+
Military should study Tackie's chin for shock absorbent qualities						
10/16/07	Sergio Mora D 10 Elvin Ayala	ESPN	m	b-	C	B-
Contender series champion now playing second fiddle to Alfonso Gomez						
10/19/07	T.J. Wilson KO 1 Travis Walker	Showtime	h	C	C	D
The most unspectacular 15-second stoppage ever!						
10/26/07	Giovanni Segura KO 1 Wilfrido Valdez	Telefutura	jfl	C+	C	C+
Segura looks like a switch-hitting Daniel Ponce De Leon						
10/26/07	Martin Castillo W 10 Jonathan Perez	Telefutura	b	B-	C-	C
Clearly superior Castillo never threatened in keep-busy fight						
11/02/07	Saul Roman W 10 Kassim Ouma	Telefutura	jm	B-	C+	C+
Roman matches Ouma's work rate, and is rewarded for powerpunching						
11/02/07	Eddie Chambers W 12 Calvin Brock	Showtime	h	B-	B-	C
Chambers arrives on world stage just in time to replace Chris Byrd						
11/03/07	Robert Guerrero KO 1 Martin Honorio	Showtime	jl	A-	B	B
Where do I sign up for the one-minute workday?						
11/03/07	Juan Manuel Marquez W 12 Rocky Juarez	Showtime	jl	A	B+	C+
Is Juarez the Spanish Oba Carr?						
11/03/07	**Joe Calzaghe W 12 Mikkel Kessler**	**PPV**	**sm**	**A+**	**A**	**A-**
Calzaghe uses extra gear to blow past Kessler and into the IBHOF						
11/06/07	Sakio Bika KO 8 Jaidon Codrington	ESPN	sm	B-	B+	A
Unrelenting action and pace too much for inexperienced Codrington						
11/10/07	Victor Ortiz KO 1 Carlos Maussa	PPV	jw	B-	B	C+
Kids, this is how you make an impressive PPV debut						
11/10/07	**Joel Casamayor W 12 Jose Santa Cruz**	**PPV**	**l**	**A**	**B**	**D-**
New York City mob bosses were impressed by the judges' audacity						
11/10/07	Antonio Margarito KO 1 Golden Johnson	PPV	w	B+	C-	C+
Margarito steamrolls his way back into the Cotto sweepstakes						
11/10/07	Miguel Cotto W 12 Shane Mosley	PPV	w	A	A	A
A minor classic, despite Cotto fading late ala De La Hoya						
11/10/07	Jesus Soto Karass W 10 Juan Buendia	Versus	w	B-	B	B+
CompuBox counted over 2,000 punches, and fans cheered every one						
11/10/07	Hasim Rahman KO 10 Zuri Lawrence	Versus	h	B-	C	C
Is everybody finally ready to declare Rahman a one-hit wonder?						
11/16/07	Joey Abell W 10 Teke Oruh	Showtime	h	C	C	C
Please don't let this be the next generation of heavyweights						
11/16/07	Jhonny Gonzalez W 10 Jose Beranza	Telefutura	jf	B-	C	B-
Unheralded Beranza makes Gonzalez work for win						
11/17/07	Abner Mares W 12 Damian Marchiano	HBO	b	B-	B	B
Lil' Abner carries some big guns						
11/17/07	Joan Guzman W 12 Humberto Soto	HBO	jl	A-	A-	B
Guzman dominates slugging, countering, and showboating categories						
11/23/07	Carlos Baldomir W 10 Luciano Perez	Telefutura	m	B	C	C-
One fighter and three judges only show up to cash a check						
11/23/07	Roman Karmazin KO 3 Alejandro Garcia	PPV	jm	B+	B	B-
This is why Karmazin will never be a voluntary defense						
11/23/07	Kermit Cintron KO 10 Jesse Feliciano	PPV	w	A-	C	C+
Cintron guts out a determined challenger and broken hand						
11/23/07	Ricardo Mayorga W 12 Fernando Vargas	PPV	sm	A-	A-	B+
It's time to retire when you can't beat the comeback victim to the stars						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo; HBO L—HBO Latino



The title of Graham Gordon's new book, *Master Of The Ring: The Extraordinary Life Of Jem Mace, Father Of Boxing And The First Worldwide Superstar* (Milo Books, paperback, 501 pages, £8.99), gives you an idea of what you're in for. Gordon is obviously out to praise Mace, and not without good reason. Mace was to British boxing in the 1800s what John L. Sullivan was on this side of the ocean. According to Gordon, Mace was not merely the father of modern pugilism, he also invented the knockout punch, played the violin, helped introduce gloves to the sport, was a globetrotting playboy, seduced more women than Wilt Chamberlain, and possessed the sensitive soul of a poet. At times, Gordon seems to have read a dime novel of Mace's life and believed every word of it.

Gordon constantly wonders why the world has forgotten Mace. At one point Gordon even scolds Hollywood for making biopics of Sullivan and Jim Corbett while ignoring Mace, the Dickensian superman. (Gordon doesn't mention that the British Film Institute never made a film about Mace either.) Perhaps the reason Mace's name rarely comes up 100 years after his death is because none of his bouts could be stamped as a classic. His record stood at 22-3-5, with hundreds of exhibitions in between, but Mace's battles didn't capture the imagination of his era, as did the Tom Sayers-John Heenan bout or the Sullivan-Corbett bout. Instead, Mace's bouts had a weirdness about them. Many ended in forfeits. An 1866 bout with Joe Goss lasted 100 minutes without either fighter throwing a punch. An 1871 bout with Joe Coburn had a similar lack of action. No wonder Sullivan came along and stole the sport from under Mace's nose.

What set Mace apart from the other mustachioed pugs of his day was his mastery of self-promotion. He was smart enough to always be where the action was, issuing challenges, having his picture taken, and generally drawing attention to himself. It was that sense of flash that kept his name in the news for years, despite his never being in a fight of the century type of bout. Mace's greatest achievement may have been that, during an era when boxing was driven underground and nearly abolished by authorities, he managed to become famous.

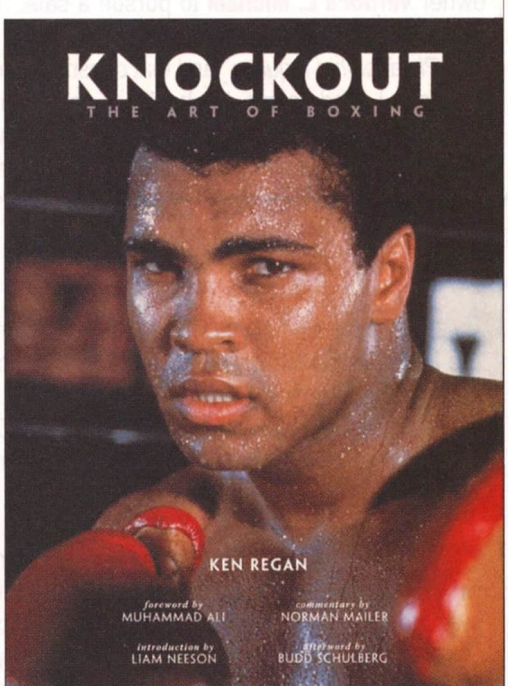
Hero-worship aside, Gordon's book is well done. By the end, as Mace is dying in poverty, you'll have felt the entire weight of Mace's life. Gordon's research makes *Master Of The Ring* one of the richest boxing bios in recent years.

—Don Stradley

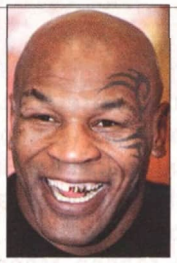
Well-known boxing photographer Ken Reagan has published a massive (11" x 14") coffee table book titled *Knockout: The Art Of Boxing* (Insight Editions, 260 pages, $75, hardbound) featuring hundreds of his photographs, and accompanied by a foreword by Muhammad Ali, commentary by Norman Mailer, an introduction by actor Liam Neeson, and an afterward by Budd Schulberg. The result is an all-star production divided into eight chapters, four of which are dedicated to heavyweight champions Ali, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, and Mike Tyson.

Reagan, whose debut boxing assignment was to cover the first Ali-Sonny Liston fight, has produced a wonderful body of work over the decades, which is showcased beautifully in *Knockout*. The hefty price tag could discourage some, but for those who can afford it, *Knockout* is the sort of book that can be passed on from one generation of boxing fans to the next, a pugilistic heirloom worthy of a permanent place in any boxing library.

—Nigel Collins

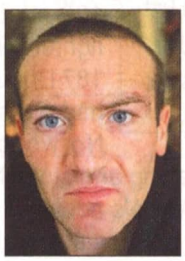


Outside the Ropes



Tyson: Serves one-day sentence

Former heavyweight champion **Mike Tyson**, 41, still had to wear the standard-issue pink underwear and the black-and-white striped uniform, but it could have been a lot worse. Instead of the one-year prison sentence recommended by prosecutor **Shane Krauser**, Maricopa County (Arizona) Superior Judge **Helene Abrams** sentenced Tyson to 24 hours in jail, three years probation, and 360 hours of community service after pleading guilty to one count of felony cocaine possession and one misdemeanor count of driving under the influence. The charges stemmed from a December 2006 incident, when police arrested Tyson after spotting him driving erratically after leaving a Scottsdale nightclub. "You worked to address your addiction and self-destructive behavior," Judge Abrams said to Tyson, who has passed 29 drug tests since his arrest. "I take responsibility for my actions," said Tyson, who had numerous supporters in court, including former wife **Monica Turner** and people who worked at a California drug treatment program where Tyson had been treated ... Former IBF cruiserweight titleholder **Kelvin Davis** returned to the ring on November 17, less than a year after suffering a broken neck and broken back in a 25-foot fall from a bridge in Auckland, New Zealand. In his comeback fight, Davis lost a 10-round decision to undefeated **Carl Davis Drummond** in San Jose, Costa Rica ... In a statement issued during the WBC's 45th convention, WBC President **Jose Sulaiman** said the organization is planning to set up its own boxing TV network. Sulaiman told the media that the monopoly of big television networks are among the major problems the WBC is facing ... The **Blue Horizon**, North Philadelphia's famed boxing venue, is up for sale with an asking price of $6.5-million. A deficit due to falling rentals prompted part-owner **Vernoca L. Michael** to pursue a sale. "I'm 61 years old and I'm recovering from a major accident," Michael told *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, "and that doesn't let me run around anymore. I need people, the business community, to step up to the plate if they want to save this major institution" ... The New York State Athletic Commission lifted the suspension of promoter **Dino Duva**, who was suspended for six months and fined $10,000 for attempting to look at the master scorecard during the heavyweight bout between **Samuel Peter**, whom Duva promotes, and **Jameel McCline** on October 6 at Madison Square Garden. At a November hearing into the matter, an apologetic Duva claimed what happened was a "nervous action" and maintained he did not intend to gain an unfair advantage. Although the suspension was lifted, Duva still had to pay the fine ... Stripper **Milana Dravnel**, 22, filed a $100-million lawsuit against **Oscar De La Hoya**, charging him with unleashing a smear campaign against her to stop the emergence of suggestive photos of the boxer that were posted on a website. Papers filed in Manhattan Supreme Court alleged fraud, defamation, interference with conduct, infliction of emotional distress, and undue influence ... The Nevada State Athletic Commission granted a continuance to Reno middleweight **Joey Gilbert** for his disciplinary hearing. Gilbert, who tested positive for six banned drugs, including anabolic steroids and amphetamines, told the commission he needed more time to gather facts ... Former WBO featherweight titleholder **Scott Harrison**, 31, was fined £500 by the Glasgow (Scotland) Sheriff Court after admitting drug possession and threatening a road worker. The charges stemmed from an incident in July 2007 when Harrison stopped his car next to **Vincent Fitzgerald** and told him he was looking for a towrope. The boxer then raised his fists and told Fitzgerald, "Don't ignore me or I'll give you one of these." When arrested, Harrison had 69 diazepam tablets in his possession. The boxer's solicitor, **Massimo Franchi**, told the court that Harrison had become dependent on diazepam, used in the treatment of anxiety, while at The Priory Clinic, but was now drug free ... Southport Magistrates Court fined Australian middleweight **Shannan Taylor** $600 for assault and ordered him to pay $300 in compensation to his victims. The 35-year-old boxer was found guilty of assaulting bar manager **Peter Francis Houston**, after allegedly groping Houston's wife, **Susan**, during a wedding reception ... **Leopoldo "Polding" Correa**, 68, died in the Philippines on November 23. Correa managed **Manny Pacquiao** during the early part of the Filipino's career and was with him when "Pac-Man" won the WBC flyweight title in December 1998 ... South African journalist and broadcaster **Leonard Neill**, 75, died in a Johannesburg hospital on November 22 following a brief, undisclosed illness. Neill covered boxing for many publications, including, the *Rhodesia Herald*, *Rand Daily Mail*, *Sunday Express*, and *South African Boxing World*. He also did radio commentary for the South African Broadcasting Company and TV commentary for SuperSport. At the time of his death, Neill worked as a matchmaker and publicist for World Sports Promotions. ■



Harrison: Fined for threats and drug possession

Quotable

"Hopkins is such an ugly fella, he scares himself when he looks in the mirror, so he's just jealous of a good-looking guy like me."

—Super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe, responding to Bernard Hopkins' threat to give him a "facelift"

"I'd never seen a man more groomed in my life. He was only there to watch a football match, but there wasn't a hair out of place and his eyebrows were plucked."

—Junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton, describing soccer star and mate David Beckham.

Ratings Analysis

For Period Ended November 26, 2007

Heavyweights: Chris Byrd (eighth last issue) exits following loss to Alexander Povetkin, who debuts at 10. Byrd's departure also raises Vladimir Virchis from nine to eight and Tony Thompson from 10 to nine.

Cruiserweights: David Haye (fourth last issue) wins the world title by stopping Jean-Marc Mormeck, who falls to two. The change allows Steve Cunningham (second last issue) to jump to number one, while O'Neil Bell slips from one to three and Krzysztof Wlodarczyk slides from three to four.

Light Heavyweights: Hugo Garay falls from eight to 10 after being disqualified against unranked Franco Sanchez. This allows Adrian Diaconu (ninth last issue) and Stripe Drews (10th last issue) to advance one spot each.

Super Middleweights: Sakio Bika (ninth last issue) and Denis Inkin (eighth last issue) trade places due to Bika's trio of wins on *The Contender*.

Middleweights: Edison Miranda (fourth last issue) exits to campaign at super middle. Felix Sturm (fifth last issue), Javier Castillejo (sixth last issue), Sebastian Sylvester (seventh last issue), and Amin Asikainen (eighth last issue) all climb one rung each. Mariano Carrera (ninth last issue) leaves following a loss to Castillejo, making room for Wayne Elcock at nine and Raymond Joval at 10.

Junior Middleweights: Kassim Ouma (sixth last issue) departs after losing to journeyman Saul Roman, which bumps up everybody rated below him last issue one notch and makes room for Sergio Martinez to debut at 10.

Welterweights: Jackson Bonsu (10th last issue) switches with Oktay Urkal (ninth last issue) due to greater activity.

Junior Welterweights: Jose Luis Castillo (sixth last issue) leaves to campaign at welter, which allows everybody rated seven through 10 last issue to move up one slot and Kendall Holt to return at 10.

Lightweights: Jose Santa Cruz rockets from eight to three thanks to his strong showing against champion Joel Casamayor. Cruz' promotion pushes down Julio Diaz, Nate Campbell, Michael Katsidis, and Alamazbek Raiymkulov one place each.

Junior Lightweights: No changes.

Featherweights: Robert Guerrero's kayo of Martin Honorio advances Guerrero from three to two and drops Honorio from seven to nine. The shakeup demotes Injin Chi from two to three and advances Jorge Linares from nine to eight.

Junior Featherweights: Steve Molitor's win over Fahsan 3K Battery pushes him from five to four, while Somsak Sithchatchawal slips from four to five.

Bantamweights: No changes.

Junior Bantamweights: No changes.

Flyweights: No changes.

Junior Flyweights: No changes.

Strawweights: Eriberto Gejon departs due to his kayo loss to Roman Gonzalez, who replaces him at number six.

Pound-for-pound: Joe Calzaghe advances from eight to five on the strength of his victory over Mikkel Kessler, which drops Israel Vazquez from five to six. Miguel Cotto jumps from 10 to seven, thanks to his win over Shane Mosley. The realignment also boosts Ricky Hatton from nine to eight and drops Rafael Marquez from seven to 10.

The Ring
"The Bible Of Boxing"

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
3. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Junior Lightweight
4. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
5. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Super Middleweight
6. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
7. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
8. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
9. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
10. **Rafael Marquez**
    Junior Featherweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended November 26, 2007

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

The Ring Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of The Ring Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com

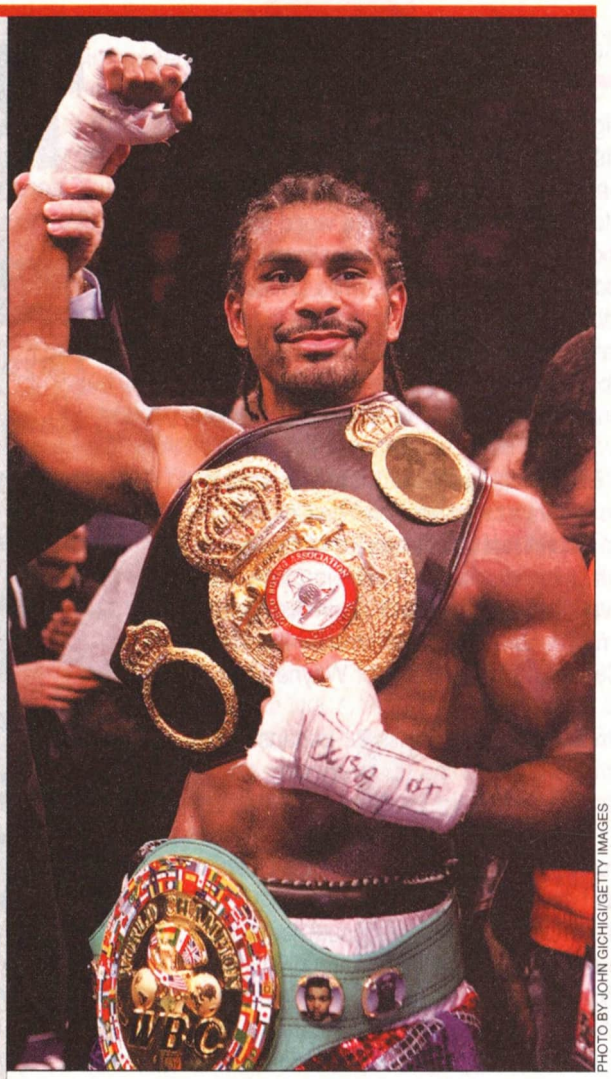


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

David Haye becomes cruiserweight world champion after stopping Jean Marc-Mormeck

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 49-3 (44)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 29-1 (22)
3. **OLEG MASKAEV** Staten Island, NY 34-5 (26)
4. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 23-0-1 (17)
5. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 47-1 (34)
6. **SULTAN IBRAGIMOV** Russia 22-0-1 (17)
7. **SERGEI LIAKHOVICH** Belarus, 23-2 (14)
8. **VLADIMIR VIRCHIS** Ukraine 24-1 (20)
9. **TONY THOMPSON** Washington, D.C. 31-1 (19)
10. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN** Russia 14-0 (11)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-4 (11)
2. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 36-2-1 (23)
3. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-5 (30)
4. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 39-2 (28)
5. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK** Germany 34-0 (22)
6. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Canada 29-0 (18)
7. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 25-1 (19)
8. **IKE QUARTEY** Ghana 37-4-1 (31)
9. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 41-10-1 (21)
10. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** Spain 40-1-1 (21)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 40-0-1 (21)
2. **ROBERT GUERRERO** Gilroy, CA 21-1-1 (14)
3. **INJIN CHI** South Korea 31-3-1 (18)
4. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 27-0-1 (19)
5. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 32-1-2 (23)
6. **NAOKI MATSUDA** Japan 27-7-3 (10)
7. **STEVEN LUEVANO** La Puente, CA 34-1 (15)
8. **JORGE LINARES** Venezuela 24-0 (15)
9. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 24-4-1 (12)
10. **NICKY COOK** England 27-1(15)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 42-4 (31)

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 37-4 (33)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 27-2 (18)
3. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 33-1 (30)
4. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 25-0 (10)
5. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 53-2-1 (43)
6. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 29-1 (17)
7. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 27-4 (17)
8. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 30-1 (20)
9. **KIKO MARTINEZ** Spain 17-0 (14)
10. **REY BAUTISTA** Philippines 23-1(18)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 22-2 (7)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 58-3-2 (42)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 20-0-2 (7)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 20-2 (16)
5. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 52-6-2 (35)
6. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 35-6 (29)
7. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 31-1-2 (20)
8. **JOSEPH AGBEKO** Ghana 25-1 (22)
9. **SIMONE MALUDROTTU** Italy 25-1 (10)
10. **LUIS PEREZ** Nicaragua 25-2 (16)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: DAVID HAYE
England 20-1 (19)

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 20-1 (10)
2. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
France 33-4 (22)
3. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 26-2-1 (24)
4. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 38-2 (28)
5. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
Wales 28-1 (21)
6. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 28-3-1 (18)
7. **MARCO HUCK**
Germany 19-0 (13)
8. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 24-1-1 (17)
9. **DARNELL WILSON**
Tacoma Park, MD 22-5-3 (19)
10. **JOHNATHON BANKS**
Detroit, MI 18-0 (13)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 48-4-1 (32)

1. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 28-0 (17)
2. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 41-3-1 (24)
3. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 25-4 (18)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 46-11-2 (31)
5. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 25-0 (17)
6. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 26-3 (18)
7. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 41-4 (25)
8. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Canada 24-0 (15)
9. **STIPE DREWS**
Croatia 32-1 (13)
10. **HUGO GARAY**
Argentina 30-3 (17)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 44-0 (32)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 39-1 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 29-3 (22)
3. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 21-0 (17)
4. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 22-1 (17)
5. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 26-1 (20)
6. **CARL FROCH**
England 22-0 (18)
7. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 25-1 (18)
8. **SAKIO BIKA**
Australia 25-3-2 (15)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
Germany 32-0 (24)
10. **JEAN PASCAL**
Canada 19-0 (14)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 32-0 (29)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-4-1 (25)
2. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 24-0 (19)
3. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
Little Rock, AR 27-1-1 (17)
4. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 28-2-1 (12)
5. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 62-7 (42)
6. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 27-2 (13)
7. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 22-1 (15)
8. **RANDY GRIFFIN**
Louisville, KY 24-1-3 (12)
9. **WAYNE ELCOCK**
England 18-2 (8)
10. **RAYMOND JOVAL**
Netherlands 37-4 (16)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 38-0 (24)

1. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 31-0 (25)
2. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 33-0 (24)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 44-5 (37)
4. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 35-5 (25)
5. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 36-5 (25)
6. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 29-1 (27)
7. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 27-3 (13)
8. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Bronx, NY 32-2 (19)
9. **JACKSON BONSU**
Belgium 26-1 (23)
10. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 38-4 (12)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 43-0 (31)

1. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 36-1-2 (21)
2. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
Brooklyn, NY 23-1 (5)
3. **GAVIN REES**
Wales 27-0 (13)
4. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 28-3-1 (18)
5. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 36-2-1 (21)
6. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 45-9-1 (30)
7. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 37-4-1 (27)
8. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 28-0-1 (11)
9. **RICARDO TORRES**
Colombia, 32-1 (28)
10. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 22-2 (12)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR
Miami, FL 35-3-1 (21)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 33-0 (17)
2. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 33-1-1 (17)
3. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 25-3 (14)
4. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 34-4 (25))
5. **NATE CAMPBELL**
Jacksonville, FL 31-5-1 (25)
6. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 23-0 (20)
7. **ALMAZBEK RAIYMKULOV**
Las Vegas, NV 25-1-1 (14)
8. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 28-2 (16)
9. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 19-2 (13)
10. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
Washington, DC 25-0 (18)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 45-3-2 (35)
2. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 48-3-1 (35)
3. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 28-0 (17)
4. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 22-0 (22)
5. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 43-6-2 (27)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 47-3-1 (34)
7. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 25-1 (19)
8. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 50-3-1 (39)
9. **MZONKE FANA**
South Africa 27-3 (10)
10. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 34-3-1 (18)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 33-2 (17)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 31-2 (27)
3. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 10-1 (6)
4. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
Mexico 33-3-2 (14)
5. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 35-2-1 (26)
6. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 47-4-1 (36)
7. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA**
Japan 32-6 (21)
8. **DIMITRI KIRILOV**
Russia 29-3 (9)
9. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 26-3 (12)
10. **Z GORRES**
Philippines 27-2-1 (15)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE**
San Leandro, CA 18-1 (11)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 32-2-2 (20)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 65-3 (34)
4. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 31-4-2 (15)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 25-0-2 (16)
6. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 29-1(23)
7. **ROBERTO VASQUEZ**
Panama 24-2 (17)
8. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 22-2 (9)
9. **JOSE LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 35-7-2 (29)
10. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 16-0 (11)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 29-0 (6)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 25-1-2 (19)
2. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 25-4-1 (19)
3. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Bell Gardens, CA 18-0-1 (14)
4. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 30-5 (16)
5. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 24-2-1 (10)
6. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 39-5-1 (30)
7. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 24-4-2 (13)
8. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 19-2 (12)
9. **OMAR SALADO**
Mexico 17-0-2 (9)
10. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
Argentina 17-0 (8)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIIDA**
Japan 22-1-3 (8)
2. **FLORANTE CONDES**
Philippines 22-3-1 (20)
3. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 18-1 (6)
4. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 61-6-5 (31)
5. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 18-3 (7)
6. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
Nicaragua 15-0 (15)
7. **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines 22-1-3 (13)
8. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 23-0 (8)
9. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 23-2 (18)
10. **OMAR SOTO**
Puerto Rico 13-1-1 (6)

By Jeff Ryan

Let's B-Hop Right To It

Sometime in 2008, light heavyweight champion Bernard Hopkins and super middleweight king Joe Calzaghe (numbers four and five, respectively, in our pound-for-pound ratings) will ascend the ring steps at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas or Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, Wales, or perhaps a very famous baseball stadium in the Bronx, remove their robes, touch gloves, and come out fighting. It won't be the best bout of '08. In fact, it could be a stinker, for both champs are too cautious and fundamentally sound to engage in a brawl for the ages. And they'll likely be too sloppy, and maybe too dirty, to provide the kind of technical masterpiece a purist craves.

The battle is probably going to go to the scorecards, which means that, barring a shutout or something close to it, the loser is going to claim that the judges got it wrong. And the absence of knockdowns, bloody visages, and unexpected developments will probably squelch any cries for a rematch. No, this matchup doesn't have the explosive potential of, say, an Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez rubber match. There's a decent chance it will be a letdown. And yet, there isn't a matchup on the fistic map that needs to be made more than Hopkins-Calzaghe.

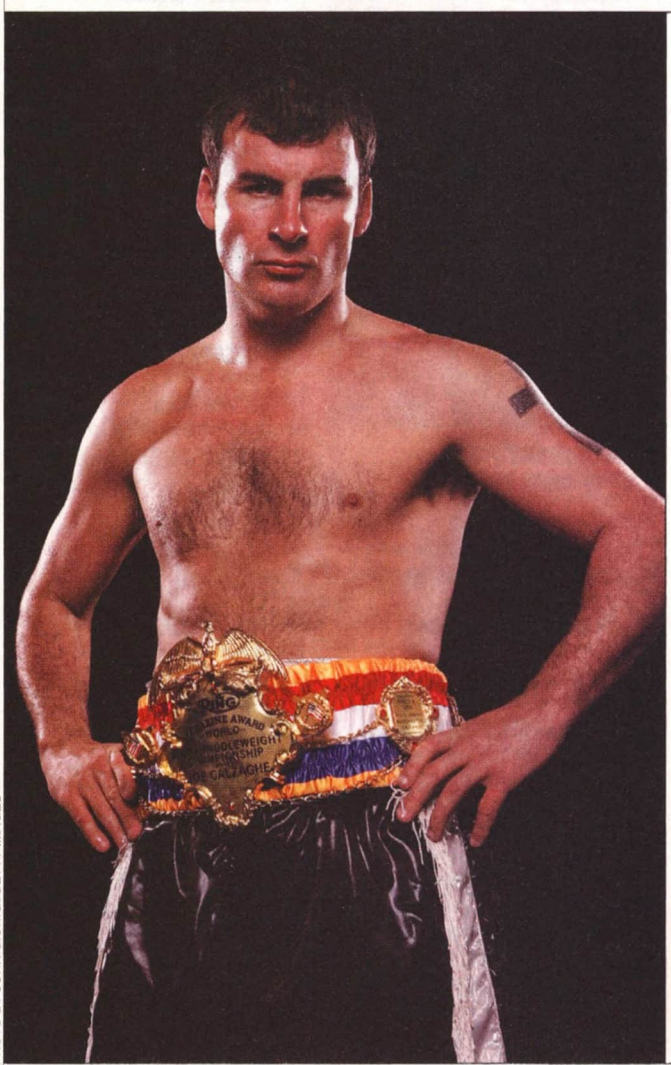


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY MICHAEL W. HEAVN

A match between Calzaghe and Hopkins would pit two reigning RING champions

Soon after Calzaghe decisioned Mikkel Kessler and issued a challenge to Hopkins, Calzaghe's promoter, Frank Warren, promised "The Executioner" that he could "pick the weight, pick the site, and pick the date." Hopkins favors 175 pounds, Yankee Stadium, and a season suitable for an outdoor showdown, most likely summer. Unfortunately, B-Hop also demanded 60 percent of the purse, which is probably less palatable to the Calzaghe camp than a suggestion that the battle be staged in Hopkins' rec room. But the stumbling blocks will be kicked to the side in time and the fight will be made. Why? Because it *has* to be made, that's why. Both fighters need it.

Calzaghe still hasn't beaten a great fighter. He could get to Canastota on his gaudy record and the distinction of being the greatest 168-pounder of all-time, but something will be missing if he doesn't have a future Hall of Famer on his list of victims. (And no, a used-up Roy Jones, who's campaigning for a date with Calzaghe, doesn't qualify.) Turning back Hopkins, even a 43-year-old, mostly inactive, energy-conserving version of the once-intimidating warrior, would be a major accomplishment. Knocking out B-Hop, something no one has done, would do even more to establish Calzaghe's greatness.

And Hopkins, he of the assured enshrinement, star-studded resume, and 19-year career, needs a Calzaghe fight, *uh*, why exactly? Well, because it's there. Nobody was advising the Philadelphian to end his seven-month retirement when he did in 2006. But since he's back, and actually fought quite well against Antonio Tarver and Winky Wright, we shouldn't feel guilty about prodding the old guy to take the toughest fight out there. Hopkins, despite a 48-4-1 (32) with 1 no-contest record, and titles in two divisions, still has more business at hand. There's a potential opponent in existence that claims to be—and just might be—better. B-Hop has never walked away from such a clear challenge to his ego. Why would he now?

Yankee Stadium, *eh*? How ironic that Hopkins wants to fight in a stadium best known for a facade, something he could never be accused of possessing.

BOOM BOX: The ESPN Classic documentary *Triumph & Tragedy: The Ray Mancini Story* was an example of the cable outlet at its best. To me, the appeal of ESPN Classic has always been its airing long-lost film clips

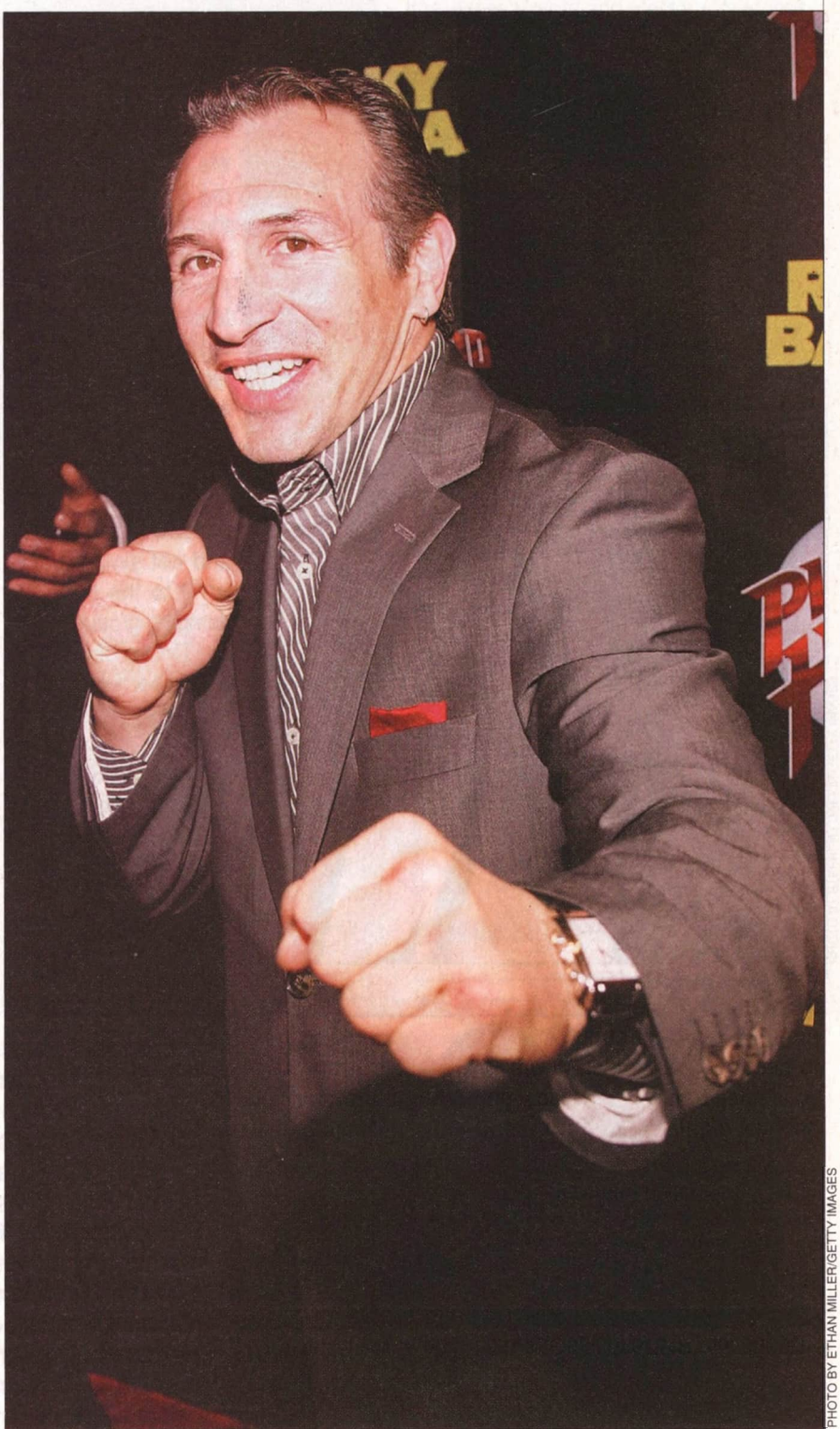


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

***Mancini at the Las Vegas premiere of* Rocky Balboa**

Personal Perceptions:

The last word on everything from The Great Wall of China to the Great Stall of the IBF:

•It was recently announced that our friends at NBC, they of the Olympic boxing telecasts that air at 6:30 a.m., will be relegating an unprecedented 3,600 hours of coverage from the 2008 Beijing Games to NBCOlympics.com. Hopefully, the Peacock-powers-that-be happened to notice flyweight Rau'Shee Warren and welterweight Demetrius Andrade winning gold medals at the 2007 World Boxing Championships, the first Americans to win amateur world titles since 1999. The team the U.S. sends to China could be more promising than any American squad in a very long time. If so, maybe the suits will air some boxing on NBC in prime time and not simply banish it to the Internet dumping ground.

PHOTO BY STEPHEN LOVEKIN/GETTY IMAGES

Laila has a new TV show

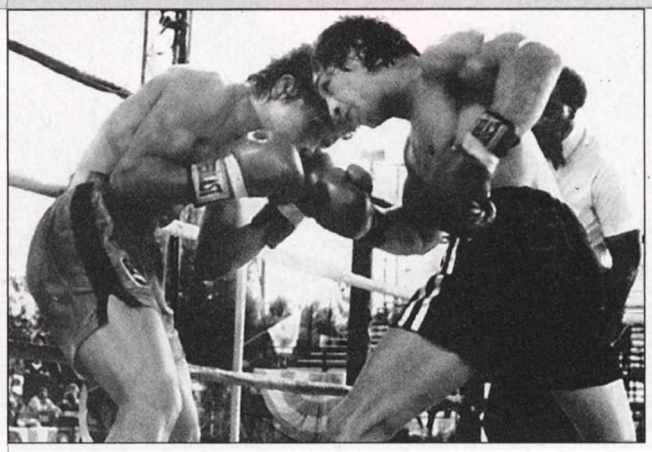
•Those of us behind the keyboard aren't supposed to root, but let's just say that seeing Jermain Taylor (bigmouth who just squeaked by in every outing), Evander Holyfield (delusional dinosaur), Chris Byrd (boring, past-his-prime featherfist), and Shane Mosley ("unknowing" user of steroids) all lose recently didn't get me too upset. Here's a chorus of "Auld Clang Syne" for the vanquished.

•Laila Ali is slated to host *Student Body*, a new reality television series that will air on The N and match high school kids against each other in tests of fitness. Coming on the (high) heels of her appearance on the ABC show *Dancing With The Stars*, is the queen of the ring determined to also become the queen of reality TV?

•Speaking of *DWTS*, it's too bad that Floyd Mayweather got an early boot when he took his turn on the dance floor. My severely twisted sense of humor had me rooting for the "Pretty Boy" to square off with pretty girl Marie Osmond in the finals just so the Osmond clan and the Mayweathers would end up sitting next to each other in the audience. Imagine Jimmy Osmond chatting up Uncle Roger, while Donny Osmond talked family values with Floyd Sr. It would be priceless.

•ESPN Classic deserves another tip of the cap for following *Triumph & Tragedy* with a showing of *Champion*, a South Korean film about Kim.

•For a guy who supposedly has plenty of weaknesses, Miguel Cotto sure manages to keep that unbeaten streak alive. Other fighters would



Mancini and Kim (left) during their tragic encounter

and telling the stories others have overlooked, not killing time with poker tournaments and reruns of *Arli$$*.

On the 25th anniversary of Mancini's tragic knockout of Duk Koo Kim in a WBA lightweight title defense at Caesars Palace, we got a look at the career of the former titlist set against the backdrop of the numerous tragedies that touched him: the death of Kim, the suicide of Kim's mother, the apparent suicide of the bout's referee, Richard Green, and the accidental shooting death of Mancini's brother, Lenny.

Some of the stories (Kim writing words that translated to "Live or Die" on his hotel lampshade) we'd heard before. Others (Mancini playing a tape of the fight for his daughter after she'd been told by a classmate that her

consider themselves blessed if they had his "deficiencies."

•Oscar De La Hoya is accused of being unable to win the big one, but has anybody examined Mosley's record? "Sugar Shane," who appeared to be a can't-miss Hall of Famer halfway through what is now a 14-year career, wouldn't get my vote if the ballot had to be filled out today.

•If the rumors prove true, Kelly Pavlik's first middleweight title defense will be against John Duddy at Madison Square Garden. It's hard to remember a fight between two white guys at the big building that generated as much interest as that one will.

•Let me make sense of this IBF heavyweight elimination tournament: Eddie Chambers defeated Calvin Brock to advance to a match with Alexander Povetkin, who beat Byrd. Then the winner of Chambers-Povetkin will face Wladimir Klitschko for the title, right? What is this? The heavyweight division, or Wimbledon?

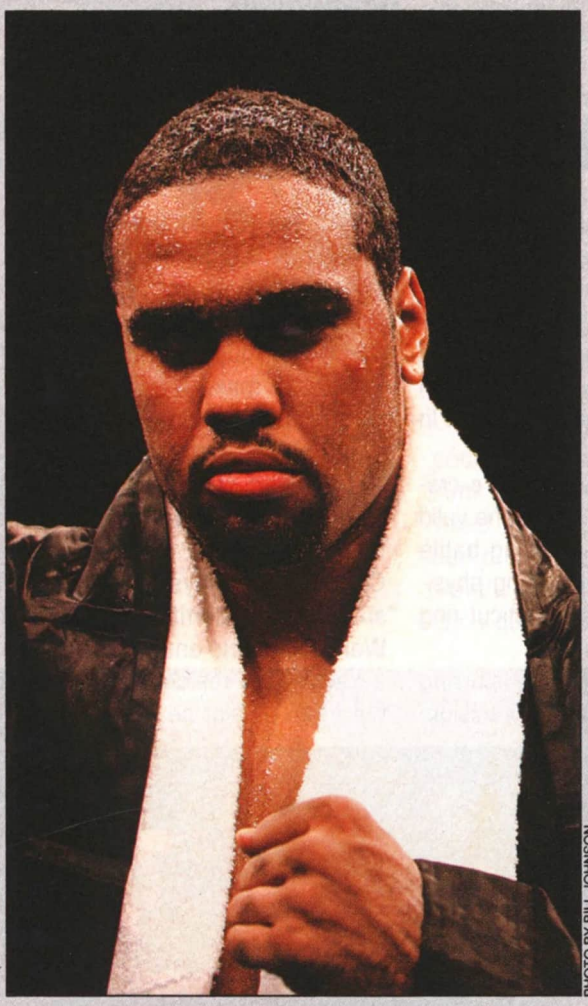


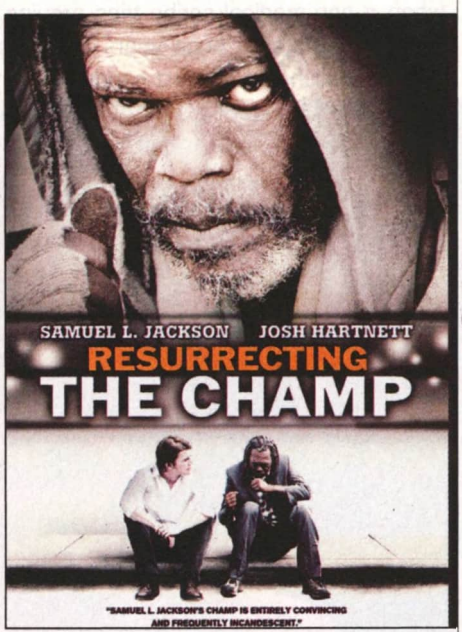
PHOTO BY BILL JOHNSON

Chambers in heavyweight round-robin

father was a murderer) were revealed for the first time. And we learned more about Kim than we'd ever known before through interviews with friends and colleagues, details of his upbringing, and insight into his mindset. Though he's always been portrayed as either a stranger from a strange land who became an unfortunate victim, or a character in a tragic soap opera, Kim came across here as a flesh-and-blood athlete with real goals and fears, a gladiator who gave literally everything he had for a lousy $20,000 purse.

It was obvious that the producers of *Triumph & Tragedy*, perhaps out of sympathy for the man's plight, made a conscious decision to be Mancini-friendly. That, however, was the documentary's weakness. Though we learned about "Boom Boom's" incredible popularity, the jolt of hope he gave to his hometown fans in the dying steel community of Youngstown, Ohio, and his exciting style, left out was any mention of how protected he was as champion. His manager, Dave Wolf, who was interviewed here extensively, always kept him away from the Aaron Pryors and Hector Camachos, yet somehow managed to keep million-dollar purses coming. (In typical Wolf fashion, he's heard here making a lame excuse for Mancini's title loss to Livingstone Bramble.)

Triumph & Tragedy excels, though, because it manages to weave Kim through Mancini's life perfectly, never letting that sad afternoon in Las Vegas be the whole story, but reminding us that it's never far from the minds of anyone who was there that day.



Now on DVD

RESURRECTING THE MOVIE: A previous column detailed my frustrating attempt to catch a screening of *Resurrecting The Champ*, the feature film that starred Samuel L. Jackson and Josh Hartnett and told the story of a homeless guy claiming to be former heavyweight contender Bob Satterfield. For reasons known only to the flick's distributor, it was harder to find than a flattering photo of Rosie O'Donnell.

Well, here's some good news: *Resurrecting The Champ* is being released on DVD in February. Rent it or, better yet, buy it. Give it a place in the library alongside *Rocky*, *Raging Bull*, *Cinderella Man*, and *Million Dollar Baby* and you won't regret it. ■

By Ivan Goldman

Writers vs. Physicians

After ace thering-online.com columnist and friend William Dettloff questioned the wisdom of de-licensing Evander Holyfield, Joe Mesi, and Edwin Valero over health and vulnerability issues, he was scolded by neurologist and ace fight physician Dr. Margaret Goodman in her RING column. Given their fragile conditions, Goodman said, those fighters shouldn't even be allowed in the gym. In a followup column, Dettloff stuck to his guns.

Memo to Dettloff: When someone with Goodman's credentials corrects you on boxing safety, there's only one valid response—surrender. Actually, it's always a losing battle when a non-medical scribe tries arguing with a ring physician. I attempted it once years ago, and Connecticut ring physician Michael Schwartz handed me my head.

I've been in conversations with fighters now slurring their words who, in their prime, spoke to me with precision. Let me tell you, it's unsettling. Sure, these guys are adults when they decide to fight on, but no matter how intelligent they are, they never seem capable of seeing themselves down the road as shuffling, broken-down ex-fighters. Somebody must protect them from themselves. Everyone's entitled to make a living, yes, but civilized people don't stand around and do nothing when someone's about to douse himself with gasoline and light a match.

Speaking of boxing writer-vs.-ring physician, I'll never forget when Lennox Lewis ripped a hole in Vitali Klitschko's face with a right hand. A moment after California ring physician Paul Wallace stopped it in round six, a dolt of a writer sitting near me screamed insults at Wallace and the entire state of California. The hollerer was a Las Vegas resident transplanted from the East Coast, but I don't claim he in any way represents East Coast or

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Does Holyfield need to be protected from himself?

PHOTO BY JED JACOBSOHN/GETTY IMAGES

Vitali's cut was horrific

Las Vegas writers, who, except for this guy, appear to have the same brain power as anyone else. In fact, if an East Coaster wanted to marry my sister, I'd probably offer no resistance unless he was also a boxing writer. That liberal I'm not willing to get.

But I digress. I stood right next to Vitali a couple minutes after the stoppage, and I swear you could see through the torn flesh right down to his skull. A section of eyeball that nature didn't intend to expose was staring back at me. You get a comparable wound on a battlefield and they rush you back to the aid station. Anyone hoping to see a giant like Lewis hammer more shots on such a traumatic lesion would have to have some vampire in his family tree. The hospital put so many stitches in Vitali's face, the staff probably had to send out for more thread. To my knowledge, the disappointed bloodsucker never conceded his error.

I see another big Russian, Alexander Povetkin, has pounded formerly tricky Chris Byrd into JELL-O. Byrd has sunk so far off the map that he can't get his fights televised in the U.S., but he fights on as a smallish speed bump overseas. What a threat he is too—a little heavyweight who's lost offensive and defensive timing and can't punch worth a damn. Unless he's got his heart set

PHOTO BY JENS-ULRICH KOCH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Povetkin hands Byrd yet another beating

on getting work as an umbrella stand, he should think about calling Dr. Goodman for an appointment. I hear Byrd may move to cruiserweight. Too late.

Now What, Sugar?: At 36, Sugar Shane Mosley is no Chris Byrd. He's still one of the best welters out there. His match with dynamic, still-improving Miguel Cotto was close enough to score either way. But he's no longer a defensive master, and if he can't line up Floyd Mayweather or Ricky Hatton for his next one, there's just no reason for him to keep taking punches.

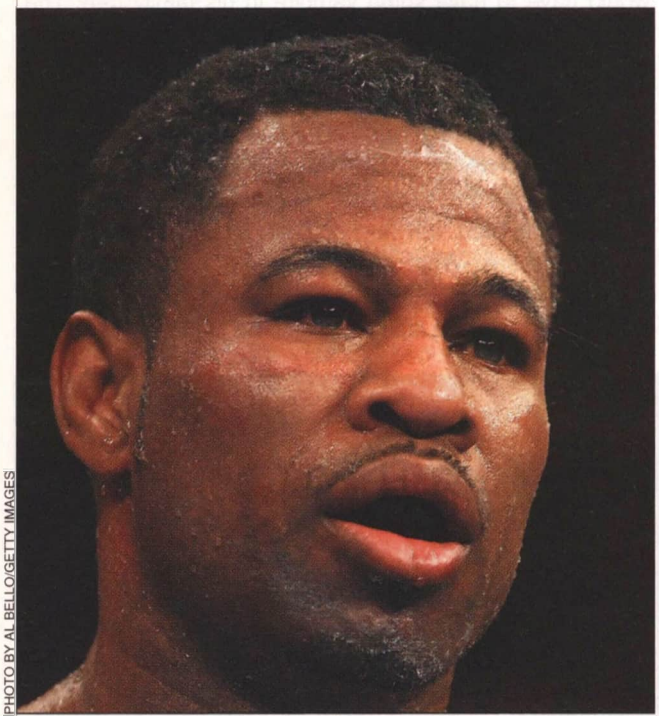


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

It's time for Sugar Shane to seriously think about retirement

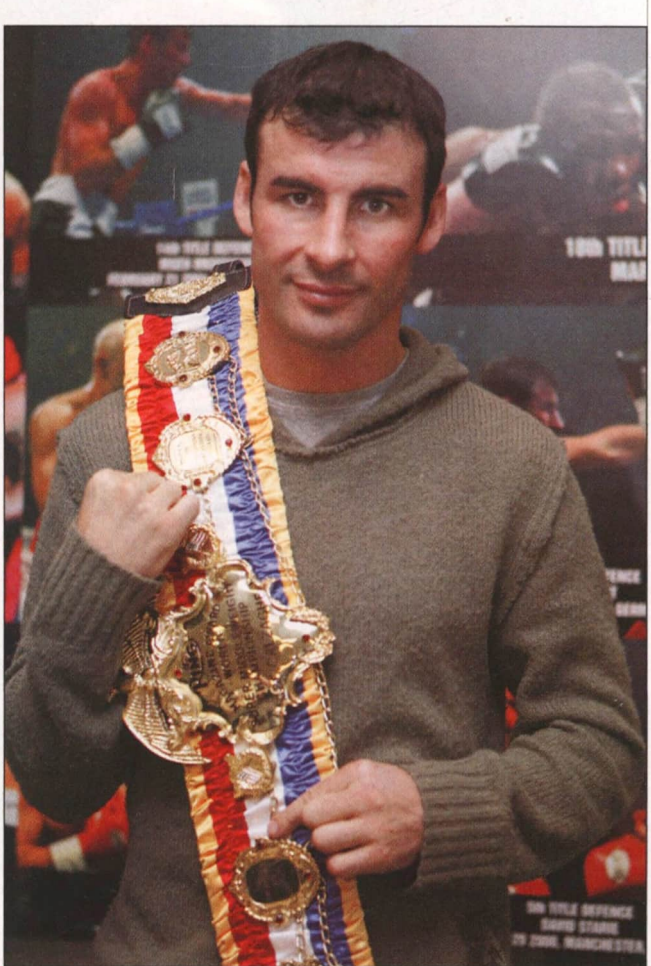
Calzaghe Should Fight Anywhere He Wants: Okay, let's say Joe Calzaghe gives in to the know-nothings and takes a fight in Las Vegas or New York, which, according to them, is the only way he can get himself certified as the real thing. Guess what: Chances are, most fans in attendance would be Brits anyway. Ask Ricky Hatton. With the dollar looking like an overcooked noodle against the pound, U.K. travel to the U.S. is no big deal. And when you get a following like those guys do, anyplace you hang your hat is home.

But even after his magnificent triumph over tough, quick-handed Mikkel Kessler, the tougher, even quicker-handed Calzaghe still hears the same old blather: If he's so good, why doesn't he fight in America? That question gets dumber and dumber as his victories pile up.

When a fighter can stay home and sell 50,000 seats for a contest at 1 a.m. local time, why should he have to compete anywhere else? It makes no sense financially or any other way. Bernard Hopkins has finally received the kind of fan appreciation he should have had a long time ago (when he fought with less finesse but more abandon), but there's no chance he could put 50,000 fans in the seats in Philly, Las Vegas, or anywhere else—unless he goes to Wales to fight undefeated Calzaghe.

As I wrote this, Hopkins was talking about defending his RING light heavyweight title against Calzaghe in Yankee Stadium. He also messaged Calzaghe through an article in Britain's *Sunday Times,* telling him that in order to be considered great, the Welshman must "get [his] ass over here." One thing Hopkins is never short on is words. The annoying part is, he can still back them up. But his claim that accomplishments overseas don't somehow count as much is narrowminded and silly.

British fighters have come a long way since they seemed to pattern their strategies after those 18th-century troops who marched in formation into an open field in those bright red tunics. In this 21st-century global village, savvy trainers around the world—and boy does that include Enzo Calzaghe—have picked up on tricks and strategies it took generations of Americans and Latin Americans to put together. That's not a bad thing. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and as fight knowledge has spread around the globe, it's ratcheted up the intensity of the competition. That's why we saw such a brilliant battle between a Welsh-



Boxing's top ticket seller

man and a Dane—although, let's face it, Kessler's corner didn't seem to have any advice beyond the standard "Go out there and get him." This was a corner that had never been in a real pickle, and when it got there, it was inside a barrel and over its head. Kessler could have received better tactical tips from the average reader of this magazine.

Lots of fighters will tell you the pressure of fighting at home in front of everyone you know isn't a 100 percent advantage. As long as a fighter is reasonably confident of fair officiating, cheers and boos are no more significant than the color of the spit bucket. Besides which, the Cardiff audience was a savvy army that *oohed* and *aahed* over Kessler's hard shots, just as it did over Calzaghe's.

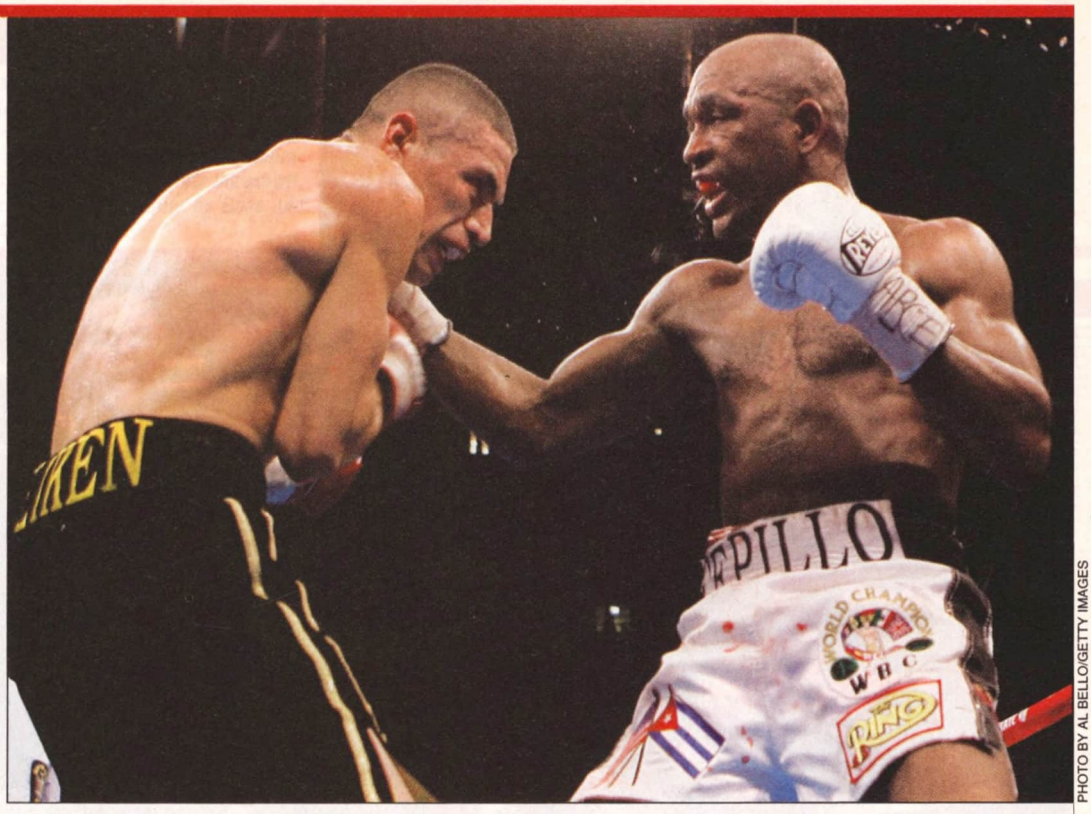


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Camamayor-Santa Cruz: A five-Magoo farce

The bigger the fight, the bigger Calzaghe fights. If that isn't the mark of a great champion, I don't know what is. Where he competes is a lot like where a 400-pound gorilla sleeps. The answer is—anywhere he wants.

Quotes Of The Month:

"I'll choose boxing over a woman. I kid you not."
—Jeff Lacy to Maxboxing.com's Thomas Gerbasi
"He's an old fighter."
—Juan Diaz on Joel Casamayor
"I would love to get a fight with him and bust his mouth."
—Casamayor on Diaz
"A super fight is breaking out in this superfight."
—Max Kellerman, commenting on round four of Calzaghe-Kessler
"I truly believe this is the fight that saved boxing ..."
—Oscar De La Hoya, still crowing over his battle with Mayweather (And some of us used to think Mayweather was the conceited one. Imagine what Oscar would be saying if he'd won the fight. As I wrote this, he was talking about making his annual Cinco de Mayo *appearance this year in Dodger Stadium. And next year, who knows? Maybe he'll walk across the water to fight in Honolulu.)*

Magoo One: When Saul Roman sank to his knees after Kassim Ouma slammed a left uppercut into his groin in round eight, referee James Jen Kin called it a knockdown. Not only did the punch land somewhere south of Guadalajara, it looked like intentional retaliation because Roman had been hitting Ouma low all night with no discernible reaction from Kin.

Roman's frequent fouls had to weaken Ouma, and had the bout been better refereed, there might have been another outcome in the close, rough super welter contest Roman won by split decision in Cabazon, California (televised by Telefutura).

Magoos Two, Three, Four, Five: To all three judges in the Casamayor-Jose Santa Cruz debacle, including Tony Paolillo, who had it 114-113 for Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz may have shut out Casamayor, who ran, clinched, and head-butted all night, while Santa Cruz made the fight and punched more effectively. I've seen plenty of ugly officiating over the years, but none worse than this. Light heavy Antonio Tarver said all three judges "should never be able allowed to judge no more in boxing because they cheated that guy." Agreed.

Referee Steve Smoger enters Magoo-land for letting relentlessly dirty Casamayor once again get away with murder. Judges Ron McNair and Frank Lombardi had it 114-113 for Casamayor. Shocking. Crazy. Fishy.

Magoo Six: Judge Glen Feldman gave the 12th round to Cotto. But straight-talking Cotto even admitted later that, for whatever reason, he didn't want to engage Mosley in that final round. From here, Feldman's score looked awfully Magoo-ey. Something's screwy. ■

Camera Clicks

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

The fighter Demetrius Hopkins has in a compromising position here is named Enrique Colin, and if you think we're resisting the urge to make a "Colin-oscopy" joke here, then you're giving us way too much credit. Colin checked out healthy as a horse, fortunately, but he didn't do so well in the fight, which Hopkins won by two scores of 100-90 and one tally of 99-91.

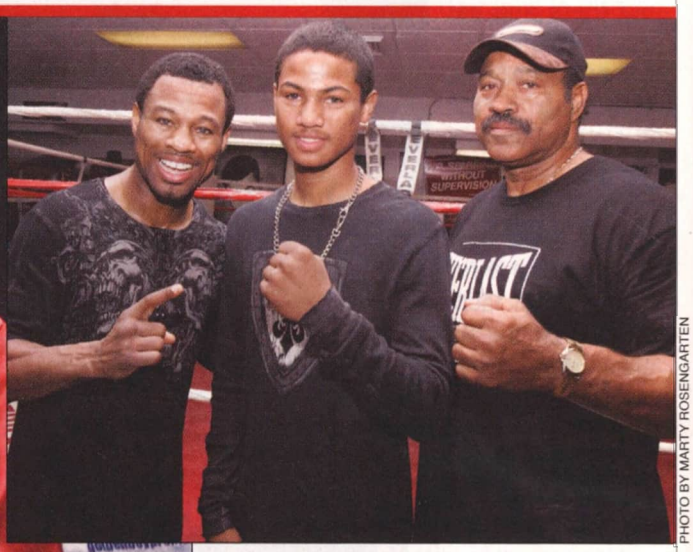


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Not too many fathers and grandfathers look as good as Shane and Jack Mosley, but that's one of the benefits of having kids fairly young ... which reminds us, what the heck is Shane Jr. waiting for? Our favorite three generations of men this side of Homer, Bart, and Abe Simpson posed together during training for Sugar Shane's November fight with Miguel Cotto, in which the Mosley in the middle (age-wise, anyway) fought well for a 36-year-old but came up a round or two short.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

The self-proclaimed "world's greatest trainer" shows off a biceps muscle that may not rank as the world's greatest, but for a guy in his 50s, it's not bad at all!

When you come into a fight sporting a 1-2-1 record, just about any result is cause for celebration—but still, this seems like somewhat of an excessive leap by junior welterweight Henry Goss into the arms of trainer Boyer Chew at the conclusion of a four-round draw against Mike Denby. When Goss actually wins a fight, we're told that the celebration includes a Triple Lindy from the top rope into the crowd, followed by a synchronized bouncing routine by Goss and Chew on a flaming trampoline.

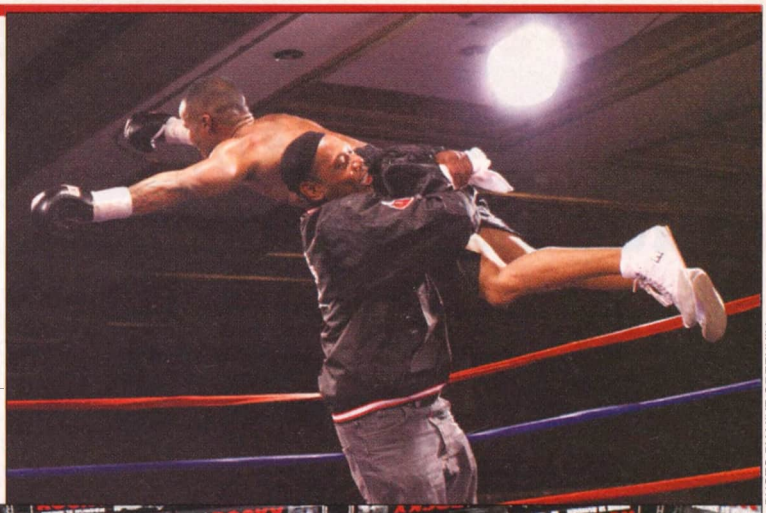


PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

PHOTO BY PATRIK STOLLARZ/GETTY IMAGES

Gee, something about that book title sounds familiar. Rocky ... Rocky ... where have we heard that title before? Well, as former super middleweight and light heavyweight contender Graciano Rocchigiani awaits his lawsuit from Sylvester Stallone, at least he has this bed of unsold autobiographies to relax upon.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

ShoBox *recently took a trip to St. Lucia, and we have to tell you, we've never seen a collection of round-card girls with such big ... hoop earrings. Wow, those things are really huge and round, aren't they?*

By Coyote Duran

Aaron Williams Cruiserweight

Most parents drill into their children's heads the hazards of talking to strangers, and just the idea of their child following a stranger into unknown territory is enough to give any parent nightmares. Nonetheless, the day Aaron Williams followed a stranger he did not suffer hazardous consequences. Instead, he found his future.

"I never wanted to get into trouble, because I'm not a troubled person, but I was always fighting in my neighborhood," said the 21-year-old undefeated cruiserweight prospect. "One day, when I was about 15, I saw this guy walking by carrying boxing gloves and I followed him. It turns out that he was on his way to the local rec center, and after watching him and everybody else sparring for a while, I decided to put on some boxing gloves too. I've been boxing ever since."

That kind of perseverance comes from his mother, Shirley, who raised Aaron and his two sisters, Toccara, 25, and India, 18, on her own. The strong work ethic she instilled in her son was critical as the Cleveland-born, Las Vegas-based Williams amassing a highly respectable amateur record of 93-10. He won four national Silver Gloves championships, two national PAL titles, and two National Junior Olympics championships, defeating Matt Godfrey (currently 16-0 as a professional) three times along the way.

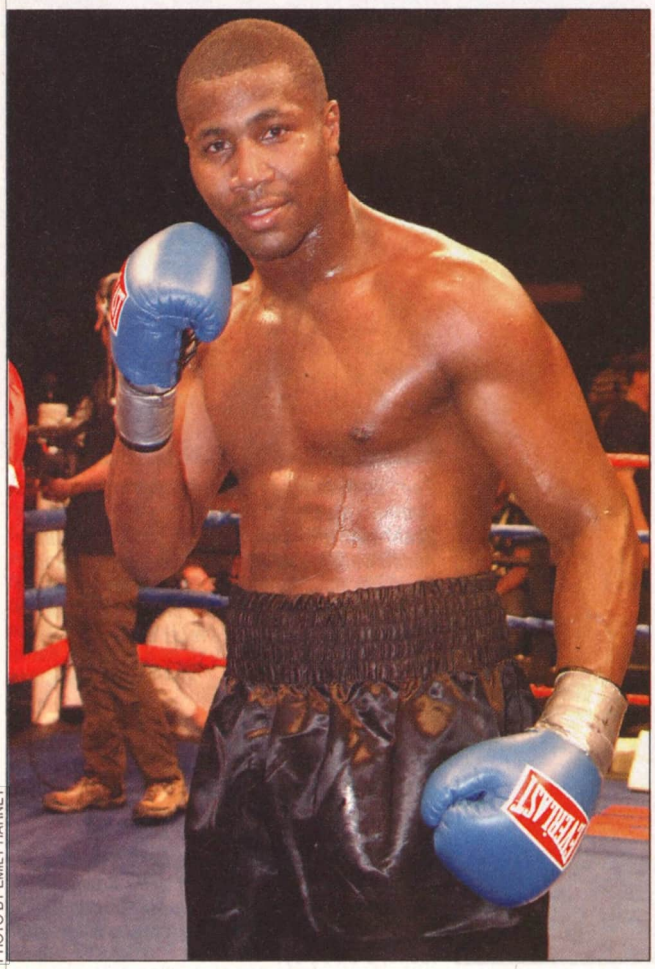


PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

Pro Record

2005		
Feb. 11	Mike Cooper, Oklahoma City, OK	KO 1
July 1	Douglas Robertson, Sparwood, BC	W 4
July 22	Tihomir Dukic, Las Vegas, NV	KO 1
Aug. 27	Harvey Jolley, Stone Park, IL	D 4
Oct. 17	Michael Waters, Ontario, CA	KO 1
Nov. 3	J.J. McAllister, San Diego, CA	KO 1
2006		
Jan. 13	James Johnson, Cicero, IL	KO 1
March 24	Alejandro Rafael Virgen, Las Vegas	W 6
May 10	Lloyd Wilson, Mashantucket, CT	KO 1
Sept. 16	Zack Page, Cleveland, OH	W 6
Nov. 2	Mike Word, Youngstown, OH	KO 2
2007		
Jan. 24	Charles Davis, Hoffman Estates, IL	W 6
April 18	Terry Porter, Hoffman Estates	KO 4
June 20	DeLeon Tinsley, Mashantucket	KO 2
Aug. 10	Jeffrey Brownfield, Lincoln, RI	KO 1
Oct. 6	Ryan Carrol, Cleveland	KO 1

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	Draw	KOs
16	15	0	1	11

Yet, despite his amateur success, Williams blew the biggest fight of the unpaid portion of his career when he lost to Devin Vargas in the 2004 Olympic Trials. Williams took an overly eager approach that caused him to lose concentration and his punches to lack their usual precision.

"If I knew what I know now back then, I would've won a gold medal," Williams said. "I probably would've never lost if I just had the patience. Now, as a professional, I believe I've done a complete turnaround. Now I know how to be patient."

Under veteran trainer Jesse Reid and co-managers Pat Doljanin and Albert Falcon, Williams turned pro in February 2005, scoring a first-round TKO of Mike Cooper in a scheduled four-rounder. But the satisfaction of winning his debut wasn't all that Williams walked away with. His fast hands and pure skills also caught the eyes of entrepreneurs Scott Borre and Dan Barnett, who contacted Doljanin and Falcon and offered a multifight sponsorship.

With financial backing, Williams fought seven more times before facing Lloyd Wilson on the undercard of the Classic Entertainment and Sports-promoted Joey Spina-Jesse Brinkley match at the Foxwoods Resort and Casino in Mashantucket, Connecticut. His first-round wipeout of Wilson impressed promoter Jimmy Burchfield, who wanted to sign Williams on the spot.

But Williams didn't feel ready for the step up in opposition that would come under a major promoter, and Doljanin agreed it would be best to move him slowly—though not too slowly. Still, they liked what Burchfield offered in terms of exposure and frequency of action, and five fights later he fought for CES again and turned in an exciting performance, scoring a spectacular second-round knockout of DeLeon Tinsley.

This time, when Burchfield offered to promote him, Williams was ready.

(Continued on Page 122)

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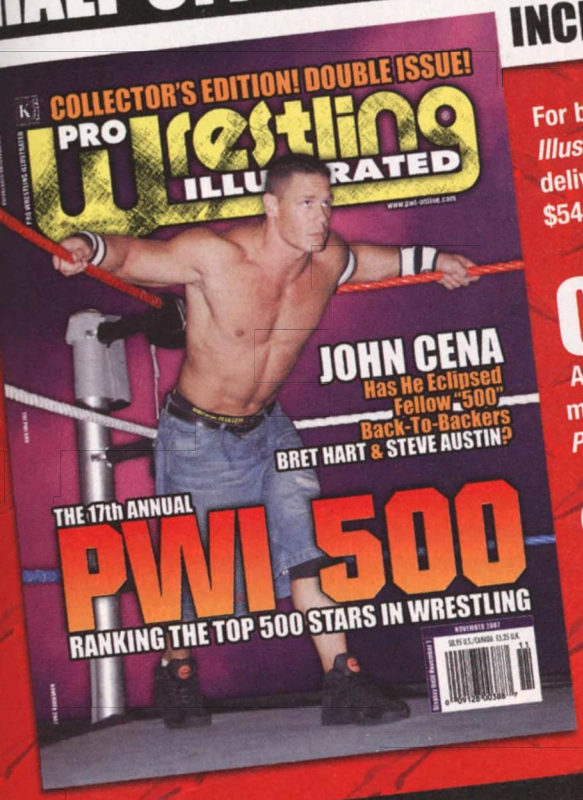

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COTTO CRASHES THE ELITE

"I'LL FIGHT ANY BIG NAME"

By Nigel Collins

As the main event approached, a reporter looked around the rapidly filling Madison Square Garden and asked the question that was on so many people's minds."Do you think Cotto will ever be as popular as Trinidad?"

The guy sitting next to him didn't even look up from his laptop as he barked his reply: "No, he's just not as

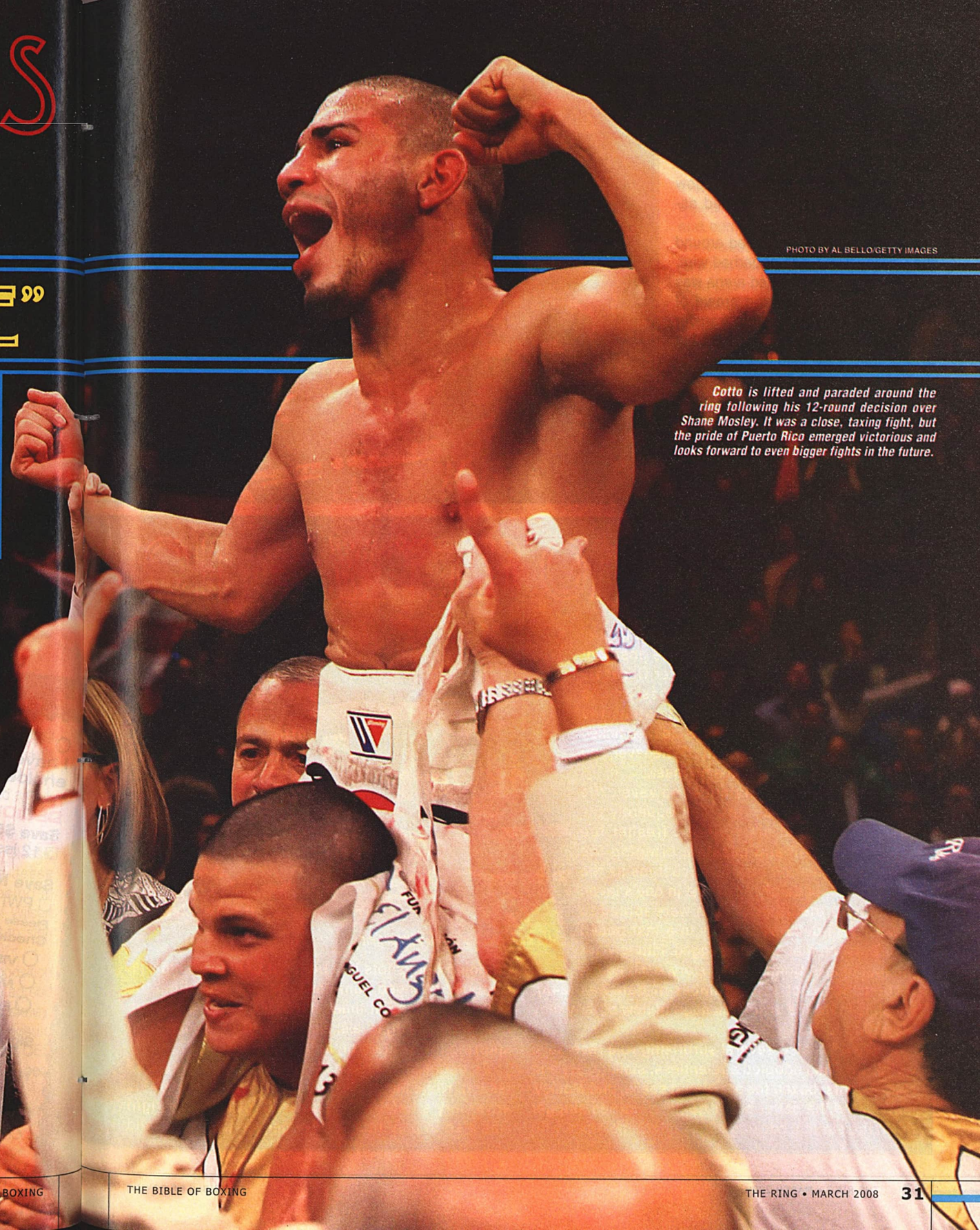

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Cotto is lifted and paraded around the ring following his 12-round decision over Shane Mosley. It was a close, taxing fight, but the pride of Puerto Rico emerged victorious and looks forward to even bigger fights in the future.

charismatic." The response was automatic, almost as if the question was not worthy of consideration. Then, as if on cue, a lusty roar greeted the larger-than-life image of Miguel Cotto that appeared on the four-sided screen above the ring, drowning out the conversation and casting a shadow of doubt on the aforementioned assumption.

Outside, the wind whipped around the Garden like a lash of barbed wire, but the inside of the storied arena was warmed by a hot-blooded crowd of 17,135 that had come not to transfer fresh flesh to the bones of the past, but to celebrate a new hero.

There will never be another Felix Trinidad. "Tito" holds a unique place in the hearts of boxing fans in general and Puerto Rican fans in particular, and while comparisons between him and Cotto are inevitable, they miss the point. Although Trinidad lingers on the oldies circuit, his important work was finished long ago. Cotto is still creating his legacy. The significant questions now concern not Trinidad, but Cotto: Exactly how good is he? And how far can he climb?

Cotto's much-anticipated match with Shane Mosley did not disappoint. As expected, it proved to be an invigorating and compelling contest between two world-class performers, not a great fight as some have branded it, but a damned good one nonetheless. Cotto's 12-round unanimous decision victory, coming as it did against such an accomplished opponent, is a handy if somewhat contradictory gauge of where he stands today and what the future may hold.

Cotto has been fighting too long to be called a work in progress, but he is a fighter of many parts, and there is almost as much to be gleaned by what did not happen in the Mosley fight as what did. Therein lays the paradoxical

PHOTOS BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Cotto (opposite page) and Mosley (above) made excellent use of their right hands in the two-way action that dominated their stirring punchout at the Garden. Both men were able to shake off punches that would have floored most welterweights and keep fighting.

BEATING MOSLEY WAS NO MEASLY FEAT

As the media awaited the arrival of Miguel Cotto and Shane Mosley at the postfight press conference, co-promoter Oscar De La Hoya trotted out the usual clichés, among them this hoary chestnut: "Ultimately, the boxing fans won," he said as the clocked ticked closer and closer to midnight. "Whenever you have a great fight, you have no loser."

In this particular instance, however, the words held more truth than is frequently the case. Mosley and his younger, fresher foe fought with skill and passion, bringing the crowd to its feet on several occasions as the ebb and flow of battle raged first in one's favor, and then in the other's. Both were forced to absorb well-delivered blows in a fast-paced confrontation that seldom flagged. Fittingly, for the first time in CompuBox history, each fighter landed the exact same number of punches (248), which is in itself a vivid indication of how bitterly they struggled for supremacy.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Cotto finds Mosley's face with a right

There were also several surprising role reversals. Cotto, who had adopted a relentless, stalking style in recent fights, boxed for prolonged spells, and Mosley, considered the better boxer going in, turned slugger down the stretch, backing his rival into the ropes with thudding bodyshots in a bold bid to enforce his will. Fortunes changed numerous times, often within the same round, and at times the roar inside the Garden rose to deafening levels, elevating the excitement and spurring the fighters on in the process.

As usual, Cotto did a lot of his serious work with his left, while Mosley's right hand bounced off of his adversary's head with regularity. But Cotto's right was also in play to a greater degree than ever, and proved very effective. Many rounds were close and difficult to score, but a pattern developed where Mosley would get the better of the first two minutes of a round, only to have Cotto close or erase the gap in the final minute.

In the sixth, Cotto made Mosley grab after connecting with a booming right and then speared him with lancing jabs, which prompted Sugar Shane to come out bouncing on his toes in the seventh. The change in tactics curtailed the amount of punishment Mosley absorbed, but failed to advance his cause sufficiently, so he was back on the attack by the ninth, and drove Cotto into the ropes with a determined body attack.

Mosley kept the pressure on in the 10th, digging downstairs with all his might. Cotto surged back and connected with hard shots to the head, only to have Mosley answer with a right uppercut and another body barrage. For the first time, chants of "Mosley" were louder than those for the crowd favorite. Not to be outdone, Cotto returned fire, and they stood and traded toe-to-toe as the crowd rose to its feet and bellowed its appreciation.

Mosley got off to an early lead again in the 11th, and although Cotto unleashed a sizzling flurry late in the round, it was only good enough to win the round on one of the judges' scorecards. Oddly enough, considering the fiercely contested nature of the bout, Cotto virtually gave away the final round to Mosley, who never stopped urging his body onward in what eventually turned out to be a losing cause. Later, Cotto, 31-0 (25), said he felt he was comfortably ahead and decided to be careful. And even though two of the three official judges gave Mosley the last round, it was not quite enough.

Judges Glenn Feldman and Pete Trematerra both scored it for Cotto, 115-113, while Wynn Kintz had it slightly wider, making Cotto the winner by a 116-113 margin. THE RING originally saw it 115-113 for Mosley, but that was from the fifth row, hardly the best vantage point from which to score such a close fight. A closer look, via videotape, resulted in a 115-114 tally for Cotto.

"It was a great fight. Miguel is very strong," said the always-gracious Mosley after seeing his record slip to 44-5 (37). "Not only was he powerful with pressure, but he can also box. He really mixed it up and did a great job out there tonight. He's a young lion on his way to greatness."

"We both did our best and we both gave it our all," echoed Cotto. "Mosley hit me with some real hard punches. He's still a great fighter. He's still Shane Mosley. However, I trained in camp with speed and movement and to face his kind of power. My jab made the difference."

—N.C.

nature of Cotto's most notable victory to date. Had he splattered Mosley or beat him to a pulp, things would be a lot more clear-cut. But nothing that definitive happened, so the best way to comprehend what the victory tells us about this stoic warrior is to separate the different elements and examine them individually in an effort to gain a greater understanding of the whole. Most significantly, Cotto added the first truly elite name to his resume, and he and his followers have every right to be stoked. Still, he never totally dominated Mosley and never came close to knocking him down, let alone becoming the first ever to stop the man who dares to call himself "Sugar." As good a win as it was, it lacked the imprimatur of undeniable greatness.

Looked at in another way, however, should not the fact that the decision over Mosley was so hard earned add to its value, not detract? As in earlier fights against lesser fighters, Cotto showed the mental toughness and physical ability to overcome adversity, shrug off punishment, and punch his way back. Like others before him, Mosley exposed that vein of vulnerability that runs through Cotto's granite-like persona, and as has been his wont, Cotto rose to the occasion in a laudatory manner—and at a higher level than ever before.

Cotto also reminded everybody (maybe even himself) that he is a skillful boxer. His rediscovered jab was a revelation that may hold the key to solving styles that pressure and powerpunching alone would never crack. Moreover, his hands-high defense limited the target for Mosley's frequent rights, which found bony skull far more often than chin. Then there was the hand speed. Going in, even most of Cotto's supporters would have conceded that Mosley was quicker. But Cotto struck with cobra-like suddenness, his punches surprisingly fast to the mark. Granted, Mosley is 36 and not quite as swift as he used to be, but his speed is still significantly above average, and Cotto stayed right with him.

Cotto's left jab is rapidly becoming a major part of his arsenal. Not only did he land more jabs than Mosley, they were hurtful jabs designed to inflict punishment, as opposed to the flicking variety thrown by Mosley.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Balance the above attributes against the inability to knock out a future Hall of Famer, and the scales could just as easily come down in favor of the former as the latter. The history of boxing is littered with knockout artists have who flamed out the first time somebody took their best punch and fired back. What is more, just as many big punchers have totally ignored defense and other more esoteric aspects of the Sweet Science. A versatile fighter like Cotto has more than one way to win, and that is not a bad thing, even if he lacks the explosive qualities of a pure puncher.

The happy thing about Cotto's situation is that the welterweight division boasts ample members capable of

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Mosley made telling use of bodypunches, forcing Cotto into the ropes and at times hurting his rival with them. They were not, however, quite enough to turn things in the veteran's favor.

making attractive fights with THE RING's number-one ranked 147-pounder. Two of them were in the same building the chilly November night that Cotto beat Mosley. One rampaged his way to a first-round knockout on the undercard—and the other co-promoted the show.

This unusual circumstance is a byproduct of the unholy marriage of convenience between Top Rank (Cotto) and Golden Boy Promotions (Mosley), arch-rivals who found it more advantageous to work together than fight an exorbitant legal battle. Throw in the fact that the still-active De La Hoya is far and away the most bankable fighter in the world, and you have a peculiar state of affairs, even by boxing's Byzantine standards.At this point, De La Hoya's financial clout has exceeded his pugilistic prowess, and in that regard he is somewhat of a wild card, capable of molding events to his liking. Regardless of what transpires, it is important to remember that a bout with "The Golden Boy" would be the most lucrative payday for any 147-pounder, Cotto included.

Top Rank's Bob Arum is hot to match Cotto with Antonio Margarito, which is quite understandable, as he has both men under contract. It would also probably be a crackling good fight, a match likely to feature exciting two-way violence. But even though Margarito obliterated overmatched Golden Johnson in the opening round of the top preliminary of HBO's PPV, in terms of marquee appeal, he is several steps below Mosley as an attraction, a virtual nonentity outside of hardcore boxing circles. Even Cotto seemed to have mixed feeling regarding the "Tijuana Tornado."

"I'll fight any big name: Oscar, [Floyd] Mayweather, [Ricky] Hatton, anyone top-ranked, whatever the company tells me," Cotto said. "I'm ready for the big names. No excuses. Whatever the company wants me to do."

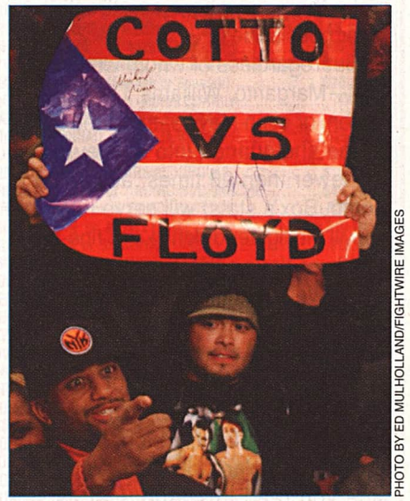

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

One of the more than 17,000 fans on hand at Madison Square Garden let everybody know who he wants Cotto to fight next.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TOP RANK

Cotto received an enthusiastic welcome upon returning to Puerto Rico after beating Mosley. To those questioning whether or not Cotto will ever be as popular at Trinidad, one look at this shows that Cotto is certainly on his way to capturing the hearts of Puerto Rican fight fans.

Shortly afterward, in response to a direct question about fighting Margarito, Cotto no longer sounded in agreement with his promoter.

"He had his chance," Cotto said. "He could've fought me tonight. He could've fought me in June. He preferred to fight [Paul] Williams. Now he's going to have to wait his turn."

The undefeated Williams held off a late rally to outpoint Margarito last July, but none of the major players is talking about fighting Williams, who is almost as anonymous as he is dangerous. If Cotto fights Margarito or Williams, he will face a risk-reward equation that doesn't make them anywhere as attractive as other possibilities.

But regardless of whom Cotto fights next—Margarito, Williams, De La Hoya, Hatton, or even Mayweather—the power jab he shotgunned into Mosley's face (no fewer than 98 times, according to CompuBox's stats) will serve him well. As will the tighter defense and fine-tuned sense of timing that made his hands seem even quicker than they were.

Actually, two things totally out of Cotto's control could deicide his immediate future: the outcome of the Mayweather-Ricky Hatton welterweight championship fight, which, if all went according to plan, will be known by the time you read this. And, just as significantly if not more so, what De La Hoya decides to do. It's no secret that he would love for Hatton to beat Mayweather. Such a result would provide him with the perfect opponent, and if that happens, it could very well push Cotto in Margarito's direction.The most tantalizing part is that Cotto versus any of the fighters mentioned promises to be a match worthy of our attention. Most of his fights are fun to watch anyway, and so far, the better the man in the other corner, the better Cotto fights—and the more he reveals his talents. We found out he could come off the floor to win in the Ricardo Torres fight and, against Zab Judah, that he was willing to fight through heavy flak to grind down and stop a talented and hard-hitting opponent. With Mosley, he took both his game and his career to another level, successfully gaining entree into the pay-per-view penthouse (more than 400,000 buys).

It is also at this juncture that many fighters come undone, and considering the competition at the top, that's understandable. It is also coming to the point where distractions, and the money to indulge in them, can aid in the unraveling. But the deadly serious Cotto appears far too focused to allow anything but his foe's fists to beat him, and that same sense of purpose might very well be his secret weapon. So far, no matter what his adversaries have done to him, Cotto has endured and prevailed. In some fighters, this would instill a false feeling of invincibility, but in Cotto, it has fostered an inner strength and a determination to improve.

Joe Calzaghe's recent success attracting more than 50,000 fans to a Welsh rugby stadium has stimulated talk of a return to ballpark fights in the United States. Light heavyweight champion Bernard Hopkins floats the idea of a match with Calzaghe at Yankee Stadium at every opportunity, which in turn has led to former foe and current promotional partner De La Hoya to talk about a May fight in Dodger Stadium. What is more, judging by the Trinidad-like celebration that greeted Cotto upon his return to Puerto Rico following the Mosley fight, he would have no trouble filling any venue on the island.

Nonetheless, staging a successful fight in a ballpark can be a tricky proposition. You've got to have the right fighters at the right time and in the right place, and then there's the weather. Cardiff's Millennium Dome, where Calzaghe drew back-to-back crowds totaling in excess of 80,000, has a retractable roof, a feature neither Yankee nor Dodger Stadium can boast.Of the two ballpark propositions, The Golden Boy in Los Angles seems more likely than B-Hop in the Bronx. After all, Oscar attracted close to 50,000 fans to El Paso's Sun Bowl Stadium in 1998, and that was for a match with a French no-hoper named Patrick Charpentier. It is not unreasonable to think that De La Hoya and Cotto could do likewise, if not better.

And let's not forget De La Hoya's frequently voiced desire to finish his career with a couple of slam-bam fights against opponents just as eager to swap punches as he, which pretty much eliminates a rematch with "Pretty Boy." If Hatton has surprised in any substantial way against Mayweather, everything could change. Barring that, Cotto is Oscar's next best option and far from a consolation prize.If De La Hoya goes in another direction and it turns out to be Mayweather-Cotto, that's all right too—maybe even better. Yes, these are good times for the welterweight division, and even if Cotto never quite equals Trinidad in the hearts of his countrymen, it won't be because he never had the opportunity to try. ■

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Calzaghe's Valley Gets AFTER KESSLER, Greener And Greener HOPKINS LOOMS

PHOTOS BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

By Brian Doogan

A joyous Calzaghe celebrates the biggest victory of his career (opposite page), a 12-round unanimous decision over Mikkel Kessler (below) in front of more than 50,000 fans at Millennium Stadium in Cardiff, Wales.

In the kitchen of her son's secluded but modest home on the edge of Blackwood, formerly a mining town in the heart of the Welsh valleys, Jackie Calzaghe's joy was, uniquely, that of a mother. "He's safe and he's home," she said, smiling, as she embraced and kissed the still-handsome face of her champion fighter, unmarked save for a red splotch of dried blood above the bridge of his nose.

For this softhearted, yet innately strong woman who has watched not one of her son's 110 amateur

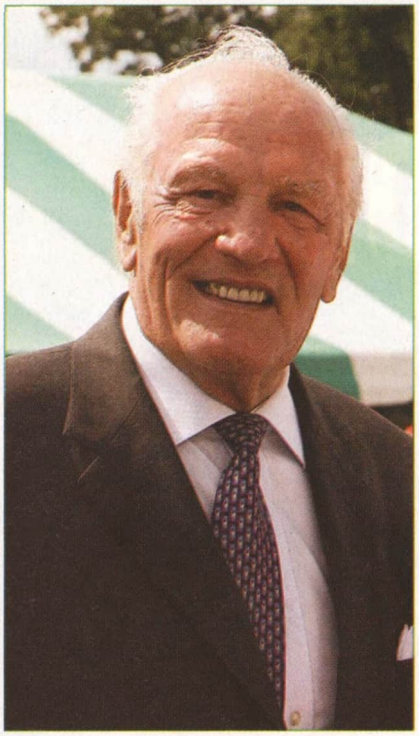


PHOTO BY POOL/ABWAR HUSSEIN

In the wake of Calzaghe's triumph over Kessler, Sir Henry Cooper, the former British heavyweight champion, has called for the Welshman to be knighted. Sir Henry also ranked Calzaghe among the top three British boxers of all-time.

and 44 professional bouts until having been reassured of his wellbeing first, this was all that mattered. John Ford, the director who filmed his 1941 classic *How Green Was My Valley* in nearby Cwm Rhondda, telling the story of a close, hard-working Welsh coal-mining family, could have made cinematic magic out of this and surrounding scenes.

Little Joe and Connor, world super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe's two sons, were being photographed holding their father's RING, WBO, WBC, and WBA title belts, both of them wearing smiles that could have lit up the valleys. Their great uncle Manlio, a big-hearted Sardinian whose passion is football (he was once president of the Italian club, Torres), took pictures with a digital camera while Alba, his wife, perched on the arm of a sofa in the adjoining living room, watched some action from the fifth round of the previous night's fight between her nephew and Mikkel Kessler on the TV in the corner. Jo-Emma, Calzaghe's girlfriend, was on the telephone, arranging for Sunday lunch for all the family when Calzaghe's uncle Uccio walked through the back door with his son's, Sergio and Andre, whose voices were hoarse from all the shouting they had done at ringside. Enzo Calzaghe, father, trainer, his son's best friend, was happiest of all, alternatively playing with his grandchildren, talking football with Manlio, or looking over toward the oldest of his three children, his only son, who stood by the kettle, enquiring above the gleeful din, "Coffee anyone?"

The only people in his house, 12 hours after the greatest win of his career, were family, and it was the same at the local pub down the road, where locals received welcoming smiles and autographs when they dared to interrupt the small, celebratory lunch (washed down by pints of Guinness stout and Carlsberg beers, not a glass of champagne in sight). Yes, Ford would have loved these scenes. For they emphasized the essence of Wales' greatest sporting hero, a family man disdainful of the corrosive art of celebrity. When Prince Charles presented him with a gold Lonsdale belt from the Welsh Sports Hall of Fame in recognition of a lifetime of achievement three days later at Cardiff Castle, he spoke proudly of this "great honor," then returned home and fell asleep into late evening, almost oblivious to the widespread acclaim that had greeted his victory on points over "The Viking Warrior."

Sir Henry Cooper, British boxing's first knight, suggested that a knighthood might be in order for Calzaghe. Frank Warren, his promoter, hoped that it could be done before Calzaghe turned 100 years old, cheerfully pointing out that "Sir Galahad was a knight when he was a young man." Warren also announced that, by popular demand and with a little parliamentary lobbying, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) would rebroadcast Calzaghe's bout with Kessler in full on the following Saturday, and Jeff Powell and Des Kelly, two of Britain's leading sports columnists, called for Calzaghe to be recognized as the Sports Personality of the Year, which is determined by a vote of BBC TV viewers.

"History, not overnight popularity, should be the judge of true greatness," wrote Kelly. "For a decade of success, I'm hoping justice is done and Joe Calzaghe is elected Sports Personality of the Year."

"All this and Sir Joe," Powell concluded. "America, eat your fighting heart out."

America, of course, was preparing to send one of its own great knights to do battle with "the Englishman" (Welsh, actually, and furthermore half-Italian). Bernard Hopkins, whose knowledge of ring geometry compensates heavily for his lack thereof in geography, was called out, by Calzaghe and Warren, in the early hours of the Cardiff morning, while close to 50,000 loyal supporters (estimates on the size of the Danish contingent ranged from

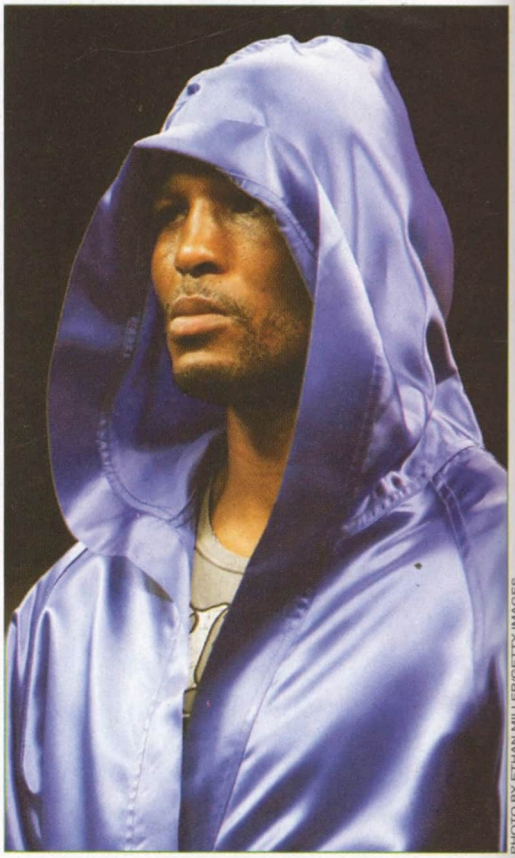


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Immediately after beating Kessler, Calzaghe called out light heavyweight champion Bernard Hopkins. "The Executioner" quickly agreed, and all that remains is for all concerned to hammer out an agreement for an international superfight.

The previously undefeated Kessler proved to be the best opponent Calzaghe has fought in 44 professional bouts. "The Viking Warrior" got off to a very promising start and drilled Calzaghe with some hellacious right hands, silencing the tens of thousands of Calzaghe supporters in attendance.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

5,000 to 10,000) made their way from the magnificent Millennium Stadium. It is a showdown that has been brewing for years.

"Frank and Jay Larkin (formerly senior vice president of Showtime and now the United States-based representative of Warren's Sports Network company) know the details better than I do because they were in on the conference call (which was chaired by Larkin in Showtime's New York offices), but Hopkins agreed to fight me in 2002, then backed out of it, asking for double the agreed amount of money, and I just hope that he doesn't run away again," said Calzaghe. "What else is there for me to do at super middleweight? I'll be totally different as a light heavyweight, and you'll see some serious destruction. I've shown what I'm all about. I want to fight the big fights, so, come on, Hopkins, let's do it."

Four days after "The Executioner" watched Calzaghe overcome Kessler from his Delaware home, he was in New York, banging the drum.

"I would love to follow in the historic footsteps of Joe Louis, who fought in Yankee Stadium, and the great Sugar Ray Robinson, who fell just short of making history at light heavyweight (retiring on his stool at the end of the 13th round against champion Joey Maxim in 1952)," Hopkins said inside B.B. King's Blues Club and Grill at Times Square. "Out of all the profound things I have accomplished in my life and career, this would be a super duper testimony to the legacy I will leave behind. I will be 43 years old and to be able to fight an Englishman who's dominated his division for many years, has an undefeated record, and just happens to be a southpaw, which I love, I think it says a lot. It's risky all around the board, for both of us. Joe Calzaghe understands that's respected here [in America], known here, but he's not well known and there is a difference. Coming to America, this is where you make it, and he hasn't made it yet because he hasn't come here to fight yet. Once he comes here, he will become well known and not just known. So it's up

to him to pack his bags and come to the legend that I'm known as, come on my soil and get out of his backyard that he's been all his career. Then we can get it on."

Calzaghe, in fact, has boxed overseas as many times as Hopkins has (twice) and he can draw 50,150 people to his Cardiff backyard, unlike Hopkins in any arena, but the Welshman has begun to understand recently, probably in the light of Ricky Hatton's successful forays onto American soil, that a big fight in the United States would be good for his legacy and for his bank balance. Having earned $5-million for beating Kessler, he could make at least twice that for meeting Hopkins, who declared that a 60-40 purse split in his favor was what he was looking for, "but we can talk."

Oscar De La Hoya, the president of Golden Boy Promotions, revealed that, as of the first week in November, the talking was already happening.

"We're now discussing with Frank Warren to make that fight because that's *the* fight to be made here in the United States," De La Hoya insisted. "Joe Calzaghe looked outstanding against Kessler, but one thing he needs, if he wants to solidify his status, is a fight against a guy like Bernard Hopkins. They both want this to happen, so it's a matter of sitting down with Frank Warren, working out the details, and making it happen.

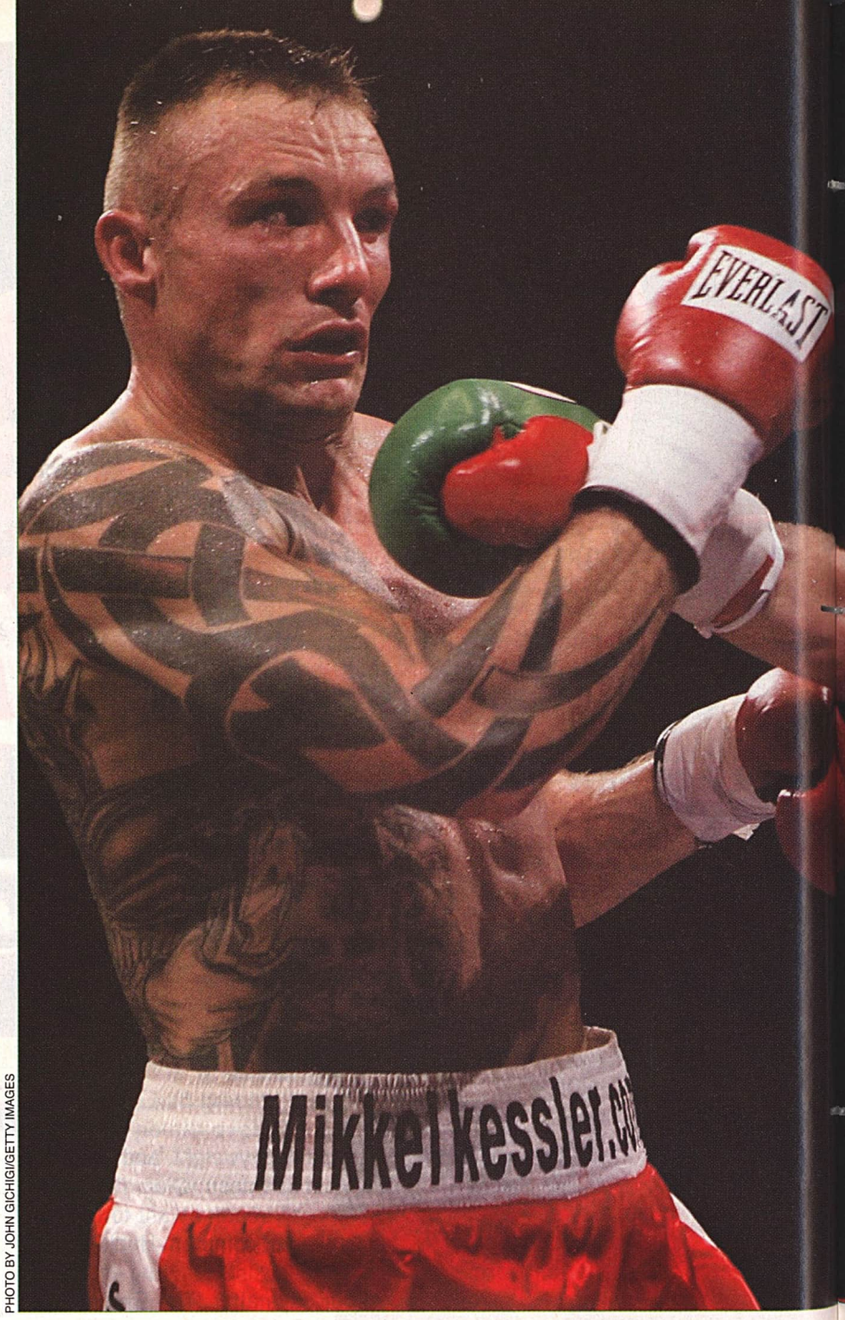
"I've got a clear understanding of what Calzaghe will face because I stepped in the ring with Hopkins (in 2004, getting stopped with a bodyshot in the ninth round), and Bernard will figure out any way to beat you. I don't care who you are, he will figure it out and he will beat you. Having said this, Calzaghe impressed me on Saturday, but Bernard Hopkins keeps on impressing me and he has the edge not only because of experience, but because he takes care of himself. He's a young 43 years old, still going strong, and Yankee Stadium some time in the early part of next year is very realistic for this fight. We know that Calzaghe has a tremendous following, and Yankee Stadium would be a tremendous event, both for New York, for the British people who would come here, and for boxing. It's a matter of just talking to everyone. Right now we are in discussions with Frank Warren about making the fight happen, then we'll move on to the other logistics."

De La Hoya and the New York fight crowd were rubbing their hands with glee at this prospect, largely because of the manner in which Calzaghe had beaten Kessler, the 28-year-old Dane whom many observers identified as the future of the super middleweight division. He may well be still, but Calzaghe demonstrated, stunningly, that it will only happen when he is gone because, simply and unmistakably, he is the most accomplished boxer ever to grace the 168-pound ranks and one of the finest exponents in the history of British boxing.

Cooper, who decked Muhammad Ali at Wembley in 1963, drew over 40,000 people to Highbury three years later in a heavyweight title fight that Ali won in the sixth round, placed Calzaghe in the top three in a story for the London *Daily Telegraph*, behind only Ted "Kid" Lewis and Jimmy Wilde. Ken Buchanan, Jack "Kid" Berg, Ricky Hatton, Barry McGuigan, Randy Turpin, Lennox Lewis, and Howard Winstone fell in behind. Inexplicably, John Conteh, who knew a thing or two about fighting the world's best light heavyweights and might have relished his own date with The Executioner, was not on the list. Calzaghe's right to be in the top three, and his inclusion among the best fighters pound-for-pound in the world is unchallengeable.

The Viking Warrior came to the Cardiff ring with a professional record of 39-0 (29) and was recognized widely as the second-best super middleweight in the world. But what elevated Kessler was the way in which he had handled his opponents, demonstrating quality technique, prodigious power, and enviable self-belief. Calzaghe had to be at his exceptional best to beat him and he was.

Despite backing up Kessler with snappy right jabs out of his southpaw stance and a light left, which glanced off Kessler's head in the opening round, the Welshman's command of the ring would be disputed fiercely by the Dane. He got his left jab working



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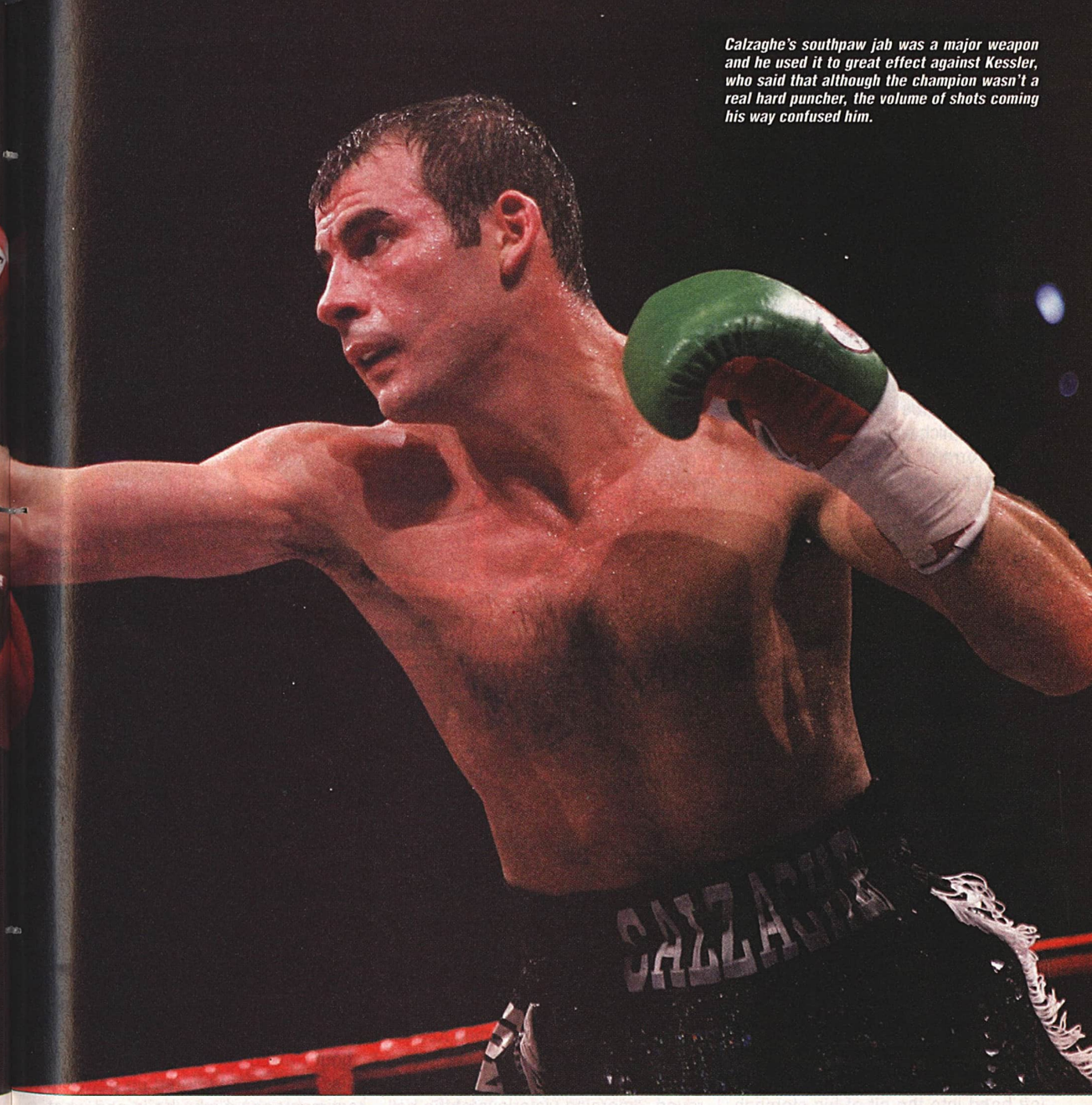

Calzaghe's southpaw jab was a major weapon and he used it to great effect against Kessler, who said that although the champion wasn't a real hard puncher, the volume of shots coming his way confused him.

and punished Calzaghe with a right and left to the head as the first round wore on, and before it was over, the Dane's jab had quickly become a worrying weapon.

Surprisingly, for a man so experienced, Calzaghe dropped his hands in the second round and paid the price when he was nailed by a hard left jab to the face and a followup right to the chin. He fought back ferociously in the third, but in round four he felt the full force of Kessler's strength, which was unleashed in the form of three savage right uppercuts and a right cross that appeared to exact a considerable toll. Calzaghe's work rate dropped. Kessler was in control. When the bell sounded, the Millennium Stadium crowd, a record for a fight indoors in Europe, was almost hushed.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

In the eighth round, Calzaghe hurt Kessler with a barrage of bodyblows, and The Dane might very well have been stopped if it wasn't for an interruption by referee Mike Ortega to warn Calzaghe for hitting in back of the head.

It was then that Calzaghe showed his genius against his younger, slightly bigger, and more powerful foe, finding a way to win, as all great fighters do. He started to see Kessler's shots coming with his built-in radar and before long was slipping them, even the uppercuts, the most damaging punches in the Dane's arsenal. Utilizing his skills, Calzaghe bossed Kessler with his sharp right jab and landed several straight lefts. He carried his momentum through the sixth and seventh rounds into the eighth, when he evaded most of Kessler's early battery of blows, then stopped him in his tracks with a left hand into the pit of his stomach. A lightning combination of hooks ensued and Calzaghe would have put Kessler on the canvas had referee Mike Ortega not taken the most inopportune moment to halt proceedings momentarily to warn the champion for hitting Kessler on the back of the head.

Calzaghe's range of movement now and the distance at which he engaged was perfect, and Kessler had no answer. Was he being too submissive? Perhaps, but he was doing all that Calzaghe allowed him to do, for this is the way that all confrontations are decided.

Kessler's resistance began to wane and a bruise came up by the corner of his left eye. If there was a single, overriding key to the victory that Calzaghe achieved, it was his diamond-hard nerve and astonishing resolve, more so even than his jab and cast-iron chin, which is among the best in boxing. He boxed brilliantly in the penultimate round, hurting Kessler once more with a left to the body, then traded with the Dane in a frantic final round, emerging victorious at the bell by virtue of his great will, surviving another right uppercut and a hard right cross before it was over.

The two men embraced in the center of the ring at the end of a superb fight of the highest class and, as the crowd dispersed into the Cardiff night, they did so with renewed respect for both men, and Calzaghe and Kessler had renewed respect for one another. The judges' decision was unanimous, Raul Caiz (U.S.) scoring 117-111, while both John Stewart (U.S.) and Massimo Barrovecchio (Italy) saw it 116-112, as did THE RING.

"I had plans for this fight, but he just crushed my dreams," Kessler acknowledged ruefully. "I landed some clean shots in the fourth and fifth rounds, and I feel that when I put him under pressure, my window came. But when I tried to get my combinations going, Joe got away. His power was not really, really hard, but when he hits you 20 times in the head, it confuses you!"

For people who had been confused about Calzaghe, 44-0 (32), for years, this Cardiff night offered up powerful testimony about who he is and what he stands for. So did those illuminating scenes at his home in Blackwood on the following Sunday afternoon when an interloper had just to look into his hazel eyes to realize how green was his valley. Hopkins, who determined long ago that he would not come here, is a wise man. ■

Brian Doogan, THE RING's European correspondent, was ringside in Cardiff for Calzaghe-Kessler.

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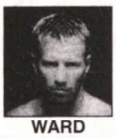

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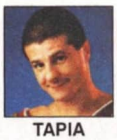

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BIKA *vs.* CODRINGTON

More Than *The Contender* Finale ...

A CONTENDER FOR FIGHT OF THE YEAR

By Don Stradley
PHOTOS BY EMILY HARNEY

It was a twin ambulance affair. Both fighters were carted off to Massachusetts General Hospital for observation, so the press gathered in a backroom at the TD Banknorth Garden in Boston and gave a round of applause for the absent Sakio Bika and Jaidon Codrington. They'd just beaten the hell out of each other to decide the winner of *The Contender* Season Three. Bika won the $750,000 prize via eighth-round TKO, and Codrington won a spot in the hearts of everyone who saw the bout. The Garden crowd was sparse at just over 6,000, but that was expected. Aside from a pair of Marvin Hagler title defenses in 1980, Boston hasn't been a major fight town since 1960, when Sugar Ray Robinson dragged his tired old body to town to be picked off by local boy Paul Pender. But on November 6, 2007, as Bika and Codrington waged one for the ages, even the empty seats vibrated with excitement.

"I've been in some good fights," said the show's host, Ray Leonard, whose jaw was still dropped

Sakio Bika connects with a right to Jaidon Codrington's head in the finals of The Contender *(opposite page). It was, by far, the best fight of the three-season series and resulted in an eighth-round TKO victory for Bika (left), who took home the reality show belt and $750,000.*

The unorthodox Bika was relentless, walking through hard shots from Codrington and repeatedly scoring with thudding blows of his own. The fight was so thrilling, it will have to be given serious consideration for 2007's Fight of the Year.

an hour after the fight. "And I've seen some good fights. But this was incredible. I cannot articulate how I feel. I'm just so proud of both guys." The rest of *The Contender* cast sat at the podium, bruised but exhilarated, as if they'd just won the World Series, as if *The Contender* was so much more than a gimmicky reality show that pits relatively unknown boxers against each other for prize money and a brief moment of glory. David Banks, who fought on the undercard, spoke glowingly of the show. "I wanted to be on *The Contender* to see if I was good enough. After seeing Bika and Jaidon, I know I still have a long way to go."

Not many members of the press were there. The lucky few who attended the fight saw things that might not have been visible on television: Bika snarling like a tiger as he pounced on Codrington; the sudden violence of Codrington's left hook; the look of shock on Bika's face after taking some of Codrington's blows; and, finally, Codrington coming out for the eighth, legless, blinking his eyes in a manner that scarily recalled Gerald McClellan moments before he lapsed into a coma against Nigel Benn. The few press members in attendance were now fairly speechless, as if they'd been asked to cover an electrical storm and had secretly been frightened. Someone jokingly suggested a rematch.

"Would that be legal?" asked Leonard.

We can't expect Bika or Codrington to duplicate what they did on November 6, 2007. The circumstances were ripe: Codrington was trying to erase the memory of his shocking knockout loss to Allen Green, and was fighting to honor his late father. Bika was a veteran with no more tomorrows. When producer Jeff Wald realized the press was too dumbstruck to ask any questions, he suggested another round of applause for two pugs who were down the street having their brains scanned. Had the fighters been there, we'd have thrown money at their feet.

●●●

The Contender group had gathered the previous day at The Legends Room above the Garden to greet the press. The fighters, showing a relaxed demeanor that comes from being on a TV show, teased each other like old pals at a class reunion. Even Wald was charming in his role of MC. After making several amusing comments about the fighters, Boston, and Buddy McGirt's waistline, Wald turned to Leonard and said, "It's been a fun three years, hasn't it Ray?"

Leonard nodded vaguely. Perhaps The Sugar Man was saving his enthusiasm for the live show. Or perhaps he was wondering if Bika and Codrington would actually live up to the hype. After all, last year's finale wasn't so memorable, and the show's ratings for 2007 were not quite as strong per household as they'd been in 2006. Or perhaps he was wondering if Boston was the best location. As if to prove how far Boston has fallen from the boxing map, a female photographer maneuvered her way into the room and shyly asked, "Which one is Sugar Ray Leonard?"

"The one in the hat," she was told. She took a picture of Bika, who was also wearing a hat. Meanwhile, Wald paid homage to Boston's reputation as a sports city, as if the Red Sox were the real reason for bringing *The Contender* to Causeway Street. Ron Wechsler, vice president of scripted content on ESPN, told THE RING there were other reasons.

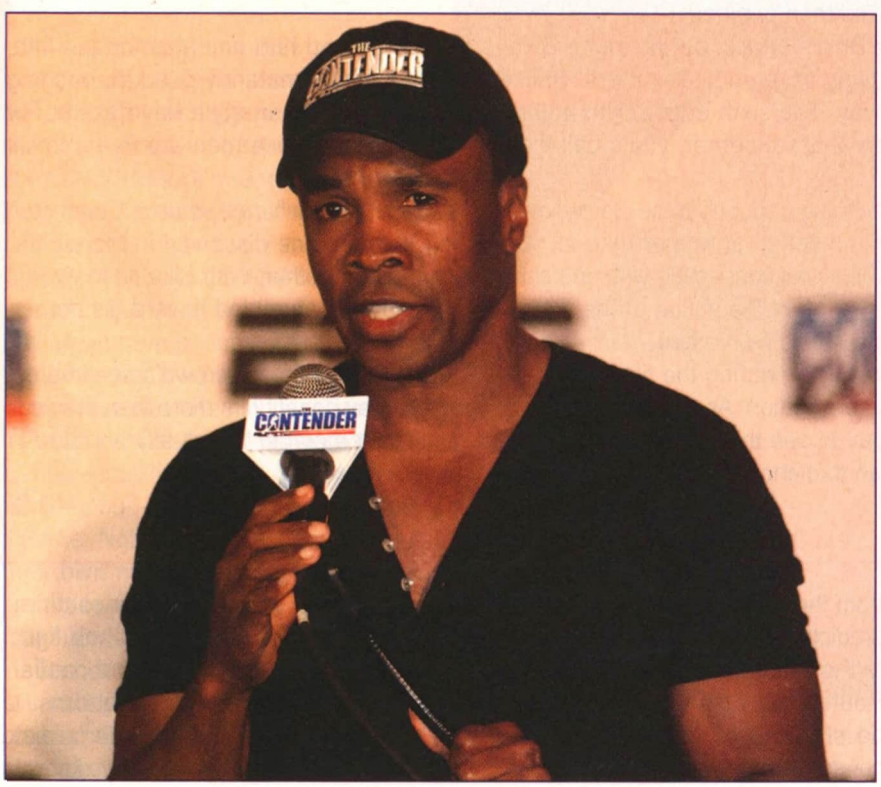
"We couldn't kick the Lakers out of the Staples Center again," Wechsler said, "and Madison Square Garden is too expensive to book, with a lot of union problems."

The Contender, it turns out, is a difficult show to produce. There had been interest in Mikkel Kessler taking on the winner of the finale, but such an arrangement would've required extensive long-range planning; the fighter would have to remain inactive while the season played out to ensure he'd still be wearing the belt. Kessler's loss to Joe Calzaghe would've ruined everything. Still, Wechsler doesn't rule out bringing in another titlist in the future, although the politics would be mind-numbing.

As for the future of *The Contender*, the network is currently evaluating the ratings and economics of the 2007 campaign, but there is already talk of two more seasons, perhaps culminating with a heavyweight cast in 2009. The heavyweights will be a challenge, Wechsler admitted, because the division isn't strong. The lower divisions would also be problematic because very few lighter-weight fighters speak English. There are also good candidates for the show who are not willing to quit their day jobs. Still, the 1.9 rating for the Season Two finale was ESPN's highest rated boxing program in nine years, and the 2007 season easily outran *Friday Night Fights*.

"The male 18-34 numbers are approximately 75 percent higher than our 2007 *Friday Night Fights* average, and almost 79 percent higher than our 2007 *Wednesday Night Fights* average," Wechsler said. "That is taking away nothing from what our incredible boxing team does week in, week out, but it just speaks to the fact that *The Contender* format is something that has an appeal to a wider and younger fan base than boxing's traditional core audience." For those wondering, *FNF* generally draws a .6 or .7, which is only slightly better than a rerun of *American Gladiators*.

Praise for modest ratings is a long way off from *The Contender*'s original mission, which, if you remember, was to clean up boxing and restore it to its former glory. Wald said in 2005: "*The Contender* will bring boxing back to prime time television with '*Fortune* 500' sponsors on a permanent basis." It didn't pan out that way. After the



Contender ***host Sugar Ray Leonard addresses the media at the TD Banknorth Garden. The television show has thrust Leonard into the spotlight again and helped elevate his popularity.***

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It Started Quickly ... And Never Let Up

Bika wades into Codrington

Jaidon Codrington and Sakio Bika tore into each other as if someone told them the fight had been scheduled for only one round. Codrington, 168, Queens, New York, went down in the opening seconds, bringing back the old fears about his chin. To compound things, Bika, 167, Australia by way of Cameroon, drilled Codrington twice while he was down. A point should've been deducted from Bika right then, but referee Dick Flaherty was apparently too overwhelmed by the action to enforce rules; they don't get many fights like this in Boston.

The 23-year-old Codrington stood up, decided he wanted to win, and within moments landed a short left hook that nearly ripped Bika's head off. Bika, 28, fell to his knees, a dazed look on his face. Then he rose, and the two fighters went at it like junkyard dogs until the bell. Both fighters landed flush left hooks just as the gong sounded, bringing the Boston crowd to its feet screaming.

The fighters moved cautiously at the start of round two, as if they were bewildered by what had happened just a few minutes before. By the round's end, they were exchanging bombs again. By the third, Bika was imposing his will on Codrington. Bika, 25-3-2 (15), isn't a great fighter, but fighting him is like standing under a series of waves. You survive the first one, but there's another on the way. And then another.

Codrington, 18-2 (14), wobbled under Bika's attack, but he stung Bika in the fourth, and hurt him again in the fifth. Codrington always seemed one punch away from ending matters. Still, it was Bika who constantly piled in, pushing Codrington into the ropes and wailing away. The sixth ended with both men throwing caveman-style haymakers, not bothering to duck. If you saw this fight on a street corner, you'd call the police and say, "These men are trying to kill each other!"

Bika dominated the seventh, his blows echoing throughout the Garden with a steady *whump, whump, whump*. Codrington was game, but it was Bika who fought with a sense of winner-take-all. Alas, their masterpiece dissolved in the eighth. Codrington was no longer firing back, and Bika was connecting with one clubbing shot after another. With Bika on the verge of landing something dangerous, Flaherty stopped the action at the 2:18 mark. Codrington stumbled toward his corner, unsure of where he was. It took several minutes to revive him.

Codrington was emotional. His father's suicide during the filming of the TV series made him the crowd's sentimental favorite, but he couldn't overcome Bika's determination. As for Bika, *The Contender* title may benefit him more than previous winners. He's all action, and people will pay to see that. Not only was Bika the only cast member to actually be rated in THE RING's top 10, he now has an American audience wanting to see more of him.

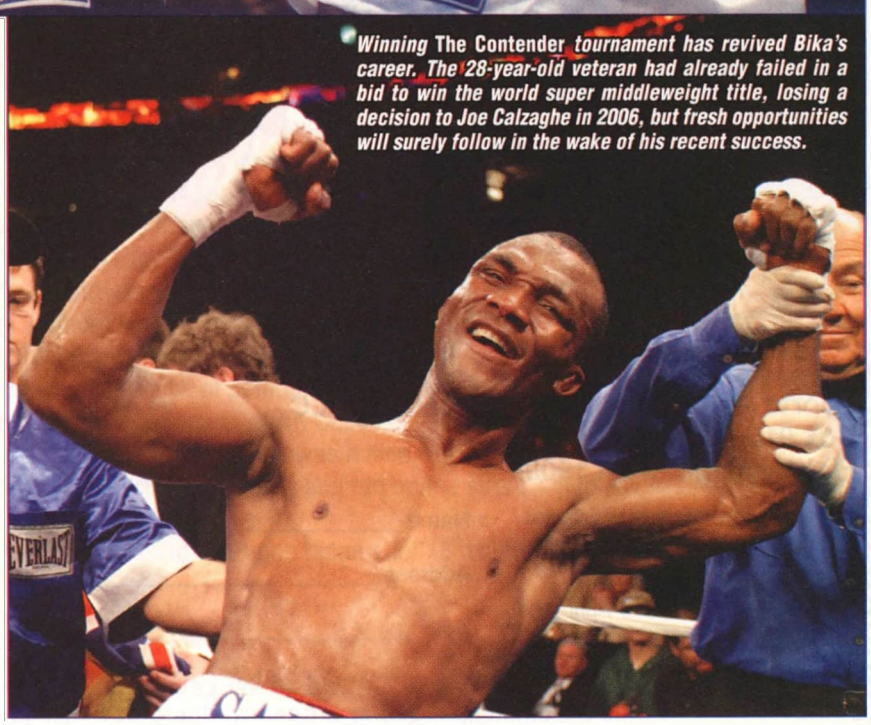
—D.S.

Season Three finale, a tired Wald offered a more realistic perspective.

"These guys will have great careers," he said. "When they fight in their hometowns, they'll sell a lot of tickets. When they retire from boxing and set up a little business, they'll have a name to use." This is a long way from the surge in popularity Wald once predicted. Instead, we can look forward to the Peter Manfredo Fluff & Fold on Route One. Still, *The Contender* may be showing us the future of boxing coverage.

Fighters of the future will probably have cameras following them 24 hours a day as part of their routine. With newspapers dropping their fight coverage almost entirely, and casual fans unlikely to read THE RING or consult the Internet, the TV-magazine format fills in the gaps. HBO has always known this, and HBO's *24/7* series probably owes a little to *The Contender*.

Codrington's wicked left hook almost finished Bika in the sensational opening round and remained a constant threat throughout the fight. But Bika stayed on his feet and gradually pounded the fight out of his younger rival.



Winning **The Contender** *tournament has revived Bika's career. The 28-year-old veteran had already failed in a bid to win the world super middleweight title, losing a decision to Joe Calzaghe in 2006, but fresh opportunities will surely follow in the wake of his recent success.*

Fighters may one day hire their own professional film crews to prepare documentary style promos for their own personal websites. Fighters with a little more money may book their own TV time, creating late night infomercials to promote themselves. This generation, the first to come of age with the Internet, grew up showboating in front of computer cams and watching each other cavort on their Myspace pages. Reality television has made it inevitable that someday we'll all be acting like fools on camera in the name of self-promotion. That includes fighters. Not only will they have to hire their own nutritionists, they'll have to spring for their own film editors and makeup artists.

The downside is that boxing may ultimately be struck with the same problem that afflicted popular music after the advent of MTV: Only the most charismatic of fighters will create a following, while less camera-friendly performers get pushed aside. Fighters who aren't comfortable exploiting their personal lives may suffer. If we are slaves to ratings, there's no telling where boxing will be forced to go.

As for *The Contender*, will a fight like Bika-Codrington ensure another season, or is it still a matter of those

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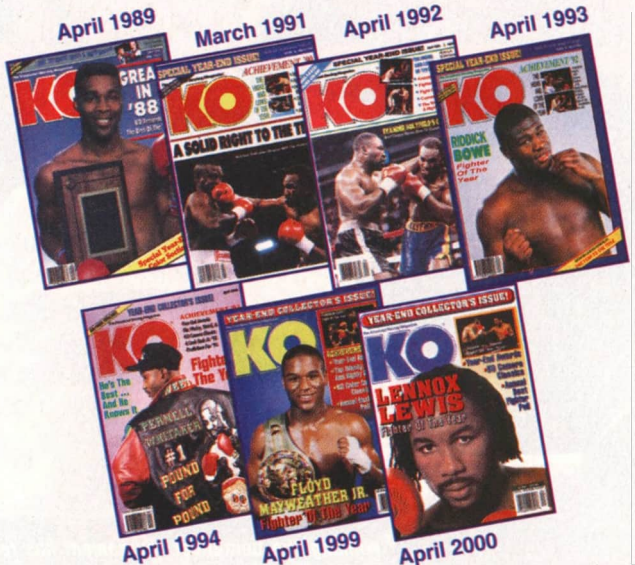

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pesky weekly numbers? "The ratings certainly play the biggest part," said Wechsler. "But it's hard to deny the success of this electrifying event. It was a big night for the series and the brand in that regard, and I think a big night for boxing in general." Wechsler bragged that a friend called him from a bar to tell him the show had been on and the bar had gone crazy. "The last time he recalled seeing a big fight in a bar was over 15 years ago. A major fight on our network, being as competitive as it was, was a plus for all."

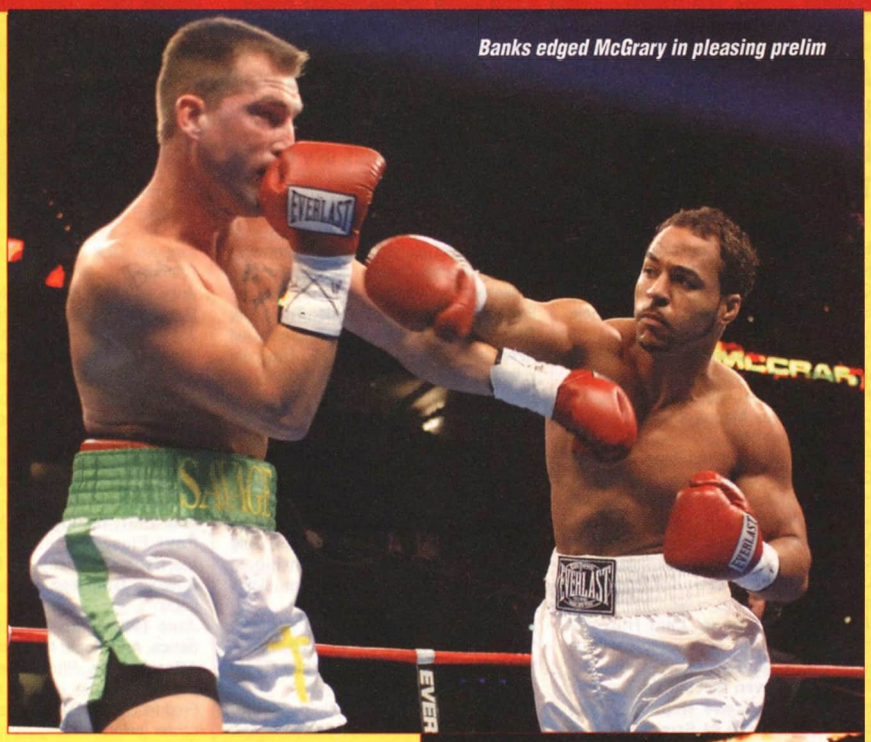
The Contender has also made it okay to like Sugar Ray Leonard again. The country fell for Leonard during the 1976 Olympics, but in time he was perceived as an ego-driven fighter who called his own shots and said to hell with everyone else. Not a tear was shed when Leonard finally retired. There wasn't a sense, as there had been with Joe Louis or Muhammad Ali, that an era had passed. Leonard was admired, but not beloved. Now the fighters on *The Contender* revere Leonard like a movie star uncle who has come back to share his wisdom. It's ironic that Leonard has been cast as a beacon for what is for the most part a bunch of lucky clubfighters.

On *The Contender*, Leonard moves comfortably among the show's hopefuls, offering encouragement. When asked if they could ever compete at the top levels, Leonard skillfully avoided giving his opinion. "It's all about confidence," Leonard said. "If you asked any of these guys if they could compete with the so-called elite fighters, I'd be surprised to hear them say no." Leonard is still slicker than new money.

As the band of *Contender* people leaked out of the Garden into the early morning darkness, Banks, who was eliminated in Episode Six, was still in awe of the main event. "I don't know if I'll ever be ready to get hit like that," he said. Sensing Banks was troubled by the prospect of an ambulance in his future, Leonard took him aside and gently spoke to him.

"There are ways to deal with it," Leonard said. "When you're on the ropes, just be aware of everything that

Contender Season 3: The Undercard

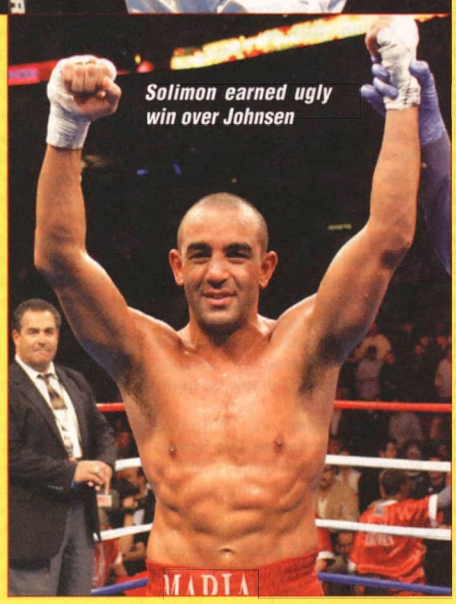


Banks edged McGrary in pleasing prelim

The evening wasn't without a few annoying game show moments. A vile master of ceremonies tried to whip up the Boston crowd in between fights, and as the clock approached 9:00 p.m., he pleaded with them to make some noise. By the time David Banks and Donny McCrary opened the televised portion of *The Contender* Season Three finales, the crowd was well warmed up.

Banks, 15-3-1 (2), Portland, Oregon, boxed well during the early rounds, but McCrary landed some booming shots in rounds five and six. Banks survived and won a majority decision. McCrary, 23-7-2 (13), St. Joseph, Missouri, is a game guy with no defense; Banks is a good boxer with no punch. Their opposing styles made for a good fight.

Sam Soliman, 35-10 (13), Melbourne, Australia, and Wayne Johnsen, 17-3 (9), Lynhurst, New Jersey, engaged in a messy six-round brawl won by Soliman via unanimous decision. Soliman was rocked in round two, but used his unorthodox and somewhat ugly style to wear down Johnsen. Johnsen seemed to score a knockdown in the final round, but referee Ed Fitzgerald didn't bother calling it or wiping Soliman's gloves.



Solimon earned ugly win over Johnsen

"I used to study tapes of the great Ray Leonard," said Soliman. "I watched over and over again to learn how to box and throw combinations. But it didn't translate. I'm not like Leonard at all. I throw punches from crazy angles, even from behind my head."

Soliman should win the Arturo Godoy Award for bringing the term "crablike" back to the sport. The grizzled Aussie with the crooked smile should be a popular favorite after his stint on *The Contender*. "I've been in boxing for 19 years," said Soliman, "and I've never been recognized in public until now."

In off-TV bouts, Brian Vera, 15-1 (9), used his awkward strength to overcome the slick moves of Max Alexander, 14-2-1 (2), and win a six-round decision.

Aslanbek Kodzoev, 19-2-1 (13), a replacement for the injured Paul Smith, had too much skill for Miguel Hernandez, 20-7 (10). Kodzoev, from Toronto by way of Moscow, showed a good array of punches and a lot of determination en route to winning a decision. The bout was marred by low blows, partly because Hernandez was wearing his protective cup up to his nipples. Still, it was a nice way to open a good night of boxing.

"*The Contender* is great," said Alexander. "People crash their cars and run up the street just to say hello to me because they've seen me on the show."

Seems that Andy Warhol's line about television making everyone famous for 15 minutes still rings true.

—D.S.

is happening ..."As Leonard walked along with Banks, he cocked his right fist and tucked in his chin; suddenly he was fending off Roberto Duran, Tommy Hearns, Marvin Hagler, all for the benefit of Banks. When cops and nightwalkers tried to interrupt to get an autograph or snap a photo, Leonard dealt with them quickly, and then returned to his tutorial. As moving as Bika and Codrington had been, it was just as touching to learn *The Contender* doesn't end when the cameras are off. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to The Ring.

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10 BURNING QUESTIONS FOR 2008

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Wladimir Klitschko hammers Lamon Brewster with a right uppercut en route to a sixth-round TKO (below), while Samuel Peter wields a mean-looking sledge, which he promises to leave in the dressing room if the two heavyweights ever meet in a rematch.

PHOTO BY PATRIK STOLLARZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

By Eric Raskin

Whether talking about wildfires in southern California or sensations when we urinate, "burning" is usually not a pleasant adjective. In a boxing magazine, however, when it's succeeded by the word "questions," it's not such a bad thing. At the very least, it isn't going to destroy homes or send you to the doctor's office.

If you're a regular reader of THE RING, you know how the "burning questions" thing works: We read your minds to come up with the 10 queries you're dying to know the answers to, then we read our crystal ball to tell you what the answers are. And what better time to do that than when a new year is just beginning? 2008 is upon us, and with it comes a whole new batch of pugilistic possibilities to wonder about, from who'll be fighting whom, to who'll be fighting at all, to who'll be winning and who'll be losing.

So let's get right to it. We can't pour water on what's burning, but we can pour ink on it:

1. Will we see a RING heavyweight champion crowned—or at least see some of the alphabet belts get unified?

The second part of the question is the easy part to answer, so let's start there: Wladimir Klitschko and Sultan Ibragimov are set to unify two belts on February 23 (inconsequential though Ibragimov's WBO strap may be to most of us), so that'll diminish by one the number of fighters misleadingly calling themselves "champion."

Crowning a real champ, however, depends mostly upon what happens with the WBC belt and upon the freedom of whoever ends up with it to unify with the Klitschko-Ibragimov winner (which, for the sake of simplifying things, we will henceforth refer to as "Klitschko," since he has to be at least a 4-to-1 fave to dust the Sultan of So-What). WBC interim titlist Sam Peter is set to face WBC no-prefix beltholder Oleg Maskaev in February. Let's presume that happens without further delay; then the winner is obliged to face Vitali Klitschko (if he continues pursuing a comeback), after which the winner may be obliged to face Juan Carlos Gomez, who recently won a box-off against Oliver McCall. To fill the vacant RING title, barring unexpected rankings

shakeups, we'll need to see whoever has that WBC belt face Wladimir Klitschko. If Vitali captures the 'BC strap, there goes that possibility. If not, it still seems there's too long a series of mandatory fights for a RING title fight to be possible in '08.

The alternative is if Ruslan Chagaev, the only titleholder we haven't yet mentioned, scores a huge win that allows him to leapfrog Peter and Maskaev in the rankings, then fights Wladimir later in the year. But remember, after he beats Ibragimov, Wlad will have two different mandatories to fulfill. *Ugh.*

Maybe it'll finally come together in 2009 ...

2. Will the incredible run of the best fighting the best that we saw from September-December '07 continue?

Maybe not initially, but as the year goes on, there's every reason to believe we'll see as many compelling, elite-level pairings as we did in '07. January usually isn't packed with superfights, and that will again be the case in '08 (unless you count Roy Jones vs. Felix Trinidad), but after that, the action could pick up quickly. We already have two great return fights on tap involving RING champions, Kelly Pavlik vs. Jermain Taylor II (February 16) and Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez III (March 1). Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez II is looking promising for March. Bernard Hopkins-Joe Calzaghe is in the discussion stage. The welterweight division is bursting with can't-miss matches, and one outstanding one, Paul Williams vs. Kermit Cintron, is already signed.

Perhaps due to the creeping shadow that is mixed martial arts, boxing promoters buried assorted hatchets in '07 and did what was best for their sport (while also making themselves some nice pocket change). That MMA shadow hasn't backed off at all, and the idea of putting superstars in dangerous fights paid off for almost everyone, so why shouldn't that trend continue in the new year? Between Pacquiao-Marquez II, Hopkins-Calzaghe, and Vazquez-Marquez III, we could see three separate bouts in which top-eight pound-for-pound talents clash. Does it get any more promising than that?

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Fans can look forward to an outstanding welterweight match between Kermit Cintron (pictured blasting Walter Mathysse with a right) and undefeated Paul Williams. It should be one of the best fights of early-2008 and continue a trend that has been inspired by competition from MMA.

3. Which of the following stars will actually fight in 2008: Vitali Klitschko, Laila Ali, or Oscar De La Hoya?

We have a popular heavyweight who wants badly to fight but may never be physically capable, the world's most popular female fighter who's still in her prime but just doesn't seem to have any interest in fighting anymore, and the all-time pay-per-view king who's been fighting once a year for most of this decade, but will suddenly decide, one of these years, that he no longer has that one fight left in him.

The easy one is Ali—she has a new husband, she wants to start a family, she has money and a life after boxing, and though it sucks for Ann Wolfe and for fans of lady pugilists, she's almost assuredly done with this brutal sport.

De La Hoya's the next easiest to call. He made some $40-million for his record-shattering fight with Floyd Mayweather last May, and what

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

"The Golden Boy" has already given the thumbs up for two fights in 2008, which is good news for the boxing industry. His 2007 match with Floyd Mayweather was the richest fight in history.

better than to satiate his competitive urges while making a financial killing in the process? There's no shortage of opponents against whom he could at least make $20-mil, and Oscar's still a skilled enough, smart enough fighter that he never seems to take a beating. We expect he'll fight on May 3, 2008, and if a Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. megafight is out there in '09 (or perhaps even ready to be made in September '08), he'll hang around for that too.

Klitschko is the tough call, and you can flip a coin regarding his health (just don't ask Vitali to flip it; he may strain his thumb ligaments). With Peter looking so shockingly vulnerable against Jameel McCline, Klitschko has to be legitimately hungry to face the winner of Maskaev-Peter, whoever it is. But that won't make getting through a training camp any easier. Whether it's because of steroid use during his amateur days, genes that have predisposed him to injury since hitting his mid-30s, or just an inexplicable string of bad luck, we have to go with recent history here, which says Vitali isn't going to make that ring walk ever again.

4. Is this the year when either Bernard Hopkins or Evander Holyfield finally retires?

The previous question concerned three thirtysomethings that the public wants to see fight; this one regards two fortysomethings that many fans would just as soon see in Canastota in 2012. Health concerns about the 45-year-old Holyfield continue to build, and his stated goal of being undisputed heavyweight champ becomes increasingly unattainable, while the 42-year-old Hopkins remains a magnificent fighter but a boring one whom only the most hardcore fans of the mental side of the fight game can appreciate.

Despite his action-averse style, "The Executioner" continues to make big bucks, so no, he isn't quitting in '08 (especially not with the possibility of a fight with Joe Calzaghe looming). He simply doesn't know what to do with himself without a fight to look forward to, so he's going to keep going until his body tells him not to.

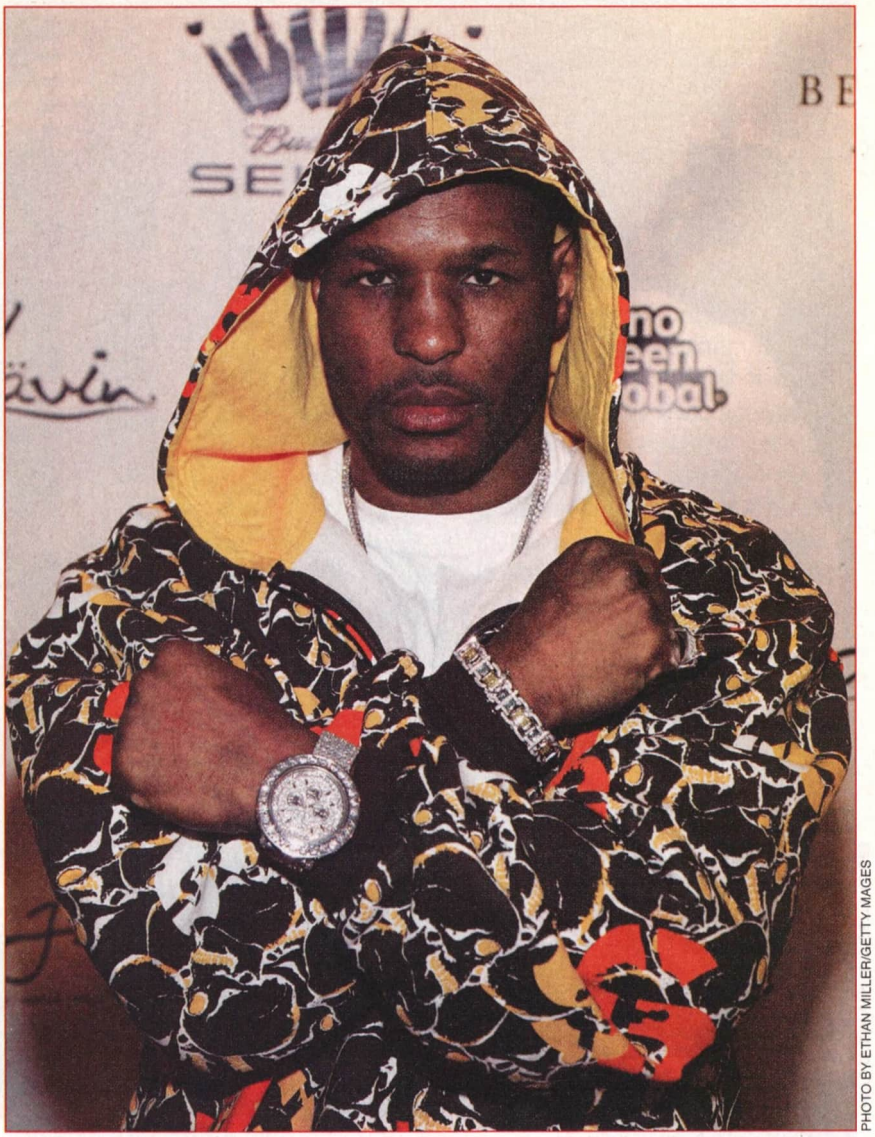


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Unless Bernard Hopkins is thoroughly beaten in his proposed match with Joe Calzaghe, there's no way he will retire in 2008. "The Executioner" is having too much fun and making too much money to bow out.

As for Holyfield, his body has already tried to pass that message along many times, and Evander has long refused to listen. But now that he's lost a one-sided fight to Ibragimov, the worst of the four heavyweight beltholders, reality has another bullet point in the debate with Holyfield—and perhaps more significantly, promoters are going to have that much more difficult a time making money with "The Real Deal." He may have another fight or two, but we'll go out on a limb and say he'll call it quits sometime in 2008.

5. Can Manny Pacquiao move to the top of the pound-for-pound list?

If Floyd Mayweather has lost to Ricky Hatton by the time you read this, then Pacquiao may already be THE RING'S pound-for-pound king—but that's not really the point of this question. We're really asking whether Pac-Man can continue to improve and evolve to the point where he actually surpasses Mayweather. And our answer is probably not. Pacquiao's 2007 campaign saw a significant dropoff from '06 (when he twice stopped Erik Morales), as he gave underwhelming performances against both Jorge Solis (KO 9) and Marco Antonio Barrera (W 12). It seems his many outside-the-ring distractions have stunted his development a bit, and he's also taking a cue from Barrera and reinventing himself as a boxer to a degree to give his career some legs. That may be good news for Manny in the long run. But if he's

Manny Pacquiao didn't do much in 2007 to overtake "Pretty Boy Floyd" in the pound-for-pound derby. Even his 12-round decision over Marco Antonio Barrera was unimpressive compared to their first fight, when "Pac-Man" stopped the Mexican icon.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

going to ascend to the pound-for-pound throne, it'll be by being at his explosive best and knocking out top fighters, not by doing just enough to win rounds against them.

Oh, and if Pacquiao signs for a rematch with Juan Manuel Marquez, his best bet is to turn it into a brawl, not to try to outslick the man who seemed to have Pac-Man figured out in the late rounds of their 2004 draw. If he faces Marquez thinking he can outbox the Mexican, Pacquiao may be kissing the number-one *and* number-two P-4-P spots goodbye.

6. Will Roy Jones vs. Felix Trinidad be either a financial or artistic success?

For all of his fame and acclaim, Jones has never been a huge draw; he's been a decent attraction around the Gulf Coast, but everywhere else he's failed to inspire, and on pay-per-view, only his heavyweight venture against John Ruiz was a truly whopping success. At this stage of his career, it's fair to say Jones alone is not going to get the turnstiles spinning. If this fight ends up making major dollars, it will be because the all-action Trinidad's massive, mostly Puerto Rican fan base still loves him enough to pay $50 to see him fight. When "Tito" un-retired the first time, against Ricardo Mayorga, the love was still there and more than 17,000 fans packed Madison Square Garden while approximately 400,000 homes bought the PPV. Jones is a bigger name than Mayorga was, but with more than three years having passed since Trinidad-Mayorga, can Tito still bring in the same numbers? This is a really tough one to predict, since we have to project about both Trinidad's enduring popularity and the fans' willingness to watch two faded Hall of Famers go at it. Our guess is the numbers will fall into the same range as Trinidad-Mayorga (helped by the fact that January should otherwise be a light month, PPV-wise), which means this fight will put everyone in the black, if not by an overwhelming margin.

Artistically, it's a whole other story. Trinidad will have been off for 30 months and will be fighting 10 pounds above his career-high weight. What are the chances he looks sharp? And Jones has slowed down significantly and hasn't beaten anyone world class in more than four years. It rates to be disappointing viewing for several reasons: It could be a one-sided blowout in Jones' favor; both fighters will leave us yearning for the days

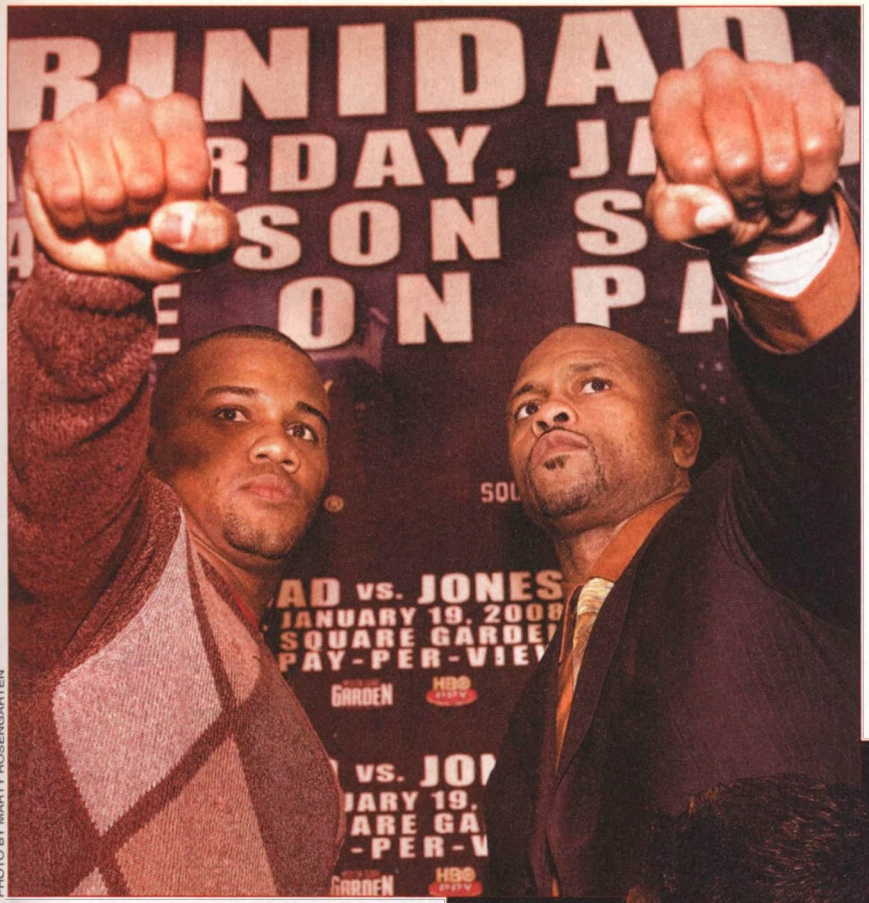


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Future Hall of Famers Felix Trinidad and Roy Jones will try to recapture some of their old magic when they clash at Madison Square Garden on January 19. It will, however, be a shock if the fight lives up to the hype.

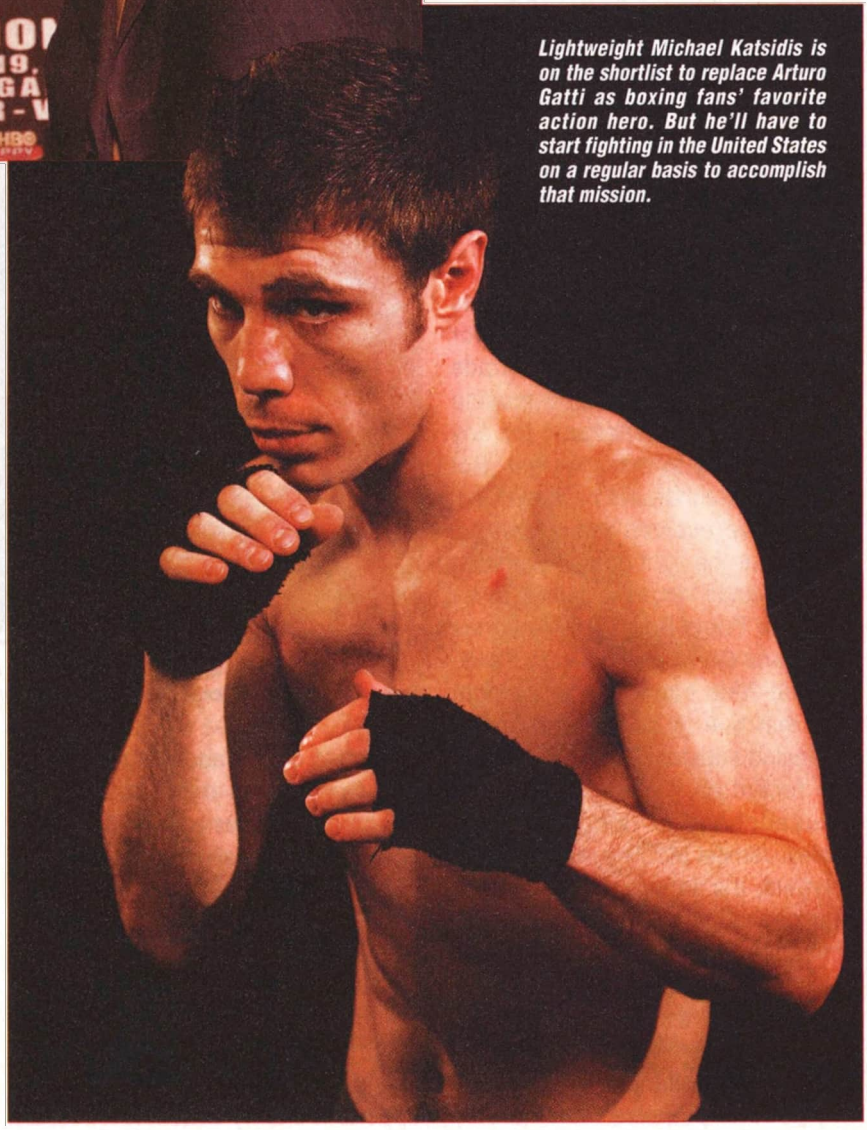
when they actually had exceptional talents; and though aging greats are frequently more exciting because they're getting hit more than ever, Jones will never be the stand-and-trade type. Buyer beware: If you pay for this, you're purchasing a fight where the quality of the matchup doesn't equal the marquee value of the combatants.

7. Who will fill the fan-favorite spot vacated by Arturo Gatti?

While it may be years before we see anyone with quite the same appeal as Gatti, we have three nominees for fighters who have the potential to come close: Michael Katsidis, Edwin Valero, and Kelly Pavlik.

Katsidis most closely resembles Gatti stylistically (and in terms of parting with hemoglobin). He seems destined for a short career—but then again, we all said the same thing about Gatti, and look how long he lasted. And, like Gatti, Katsidis is a foreigner (he's Australian, Gatti is Canadian). Gatti's star power in America was helped by the fact that he relocated to the States before his career even began; Katsidis just fought in the U.S. for the first time this past July, in his 23rd pro fight. If he's to be as popular on American TV as Gatti was, he'll need to keep fighting in the U.S. and keep putting on performances like he did in '07 against Graham Earl and Czar Amonsot. It's a longshot. But put him in against Juan Diaz, and you may see the kind of classic that turns both fighters into instant legends.

If Katsidis faces minor hurdles winning over the American audience, then Valero has to deal with full-on roadblocks. The Venezuelan bomber isn't allowed to fight in the States due to medical concerns, making him little more than a YouTube sensation



Lightweight Michael Katsidis is on the shortlist to replace Arturo Gatti as boxing fans' favorite action hero. But he'll have to start fighting in the United States on a regular basis to accomplish that mission.

PHOTO BY RYAN PIERCE/GETTY IMAGES

within our borders. A pay-per-view fight in Mexico (slated for just after our press deadline) is a step in the right direction, but it's hard to imagine "El Inca" becoming the next Gatti until he's permitted to fight in America.

That leaves Pavlik as the overall top candidate. He's already surpassed Gatti in actual accomplishment by winning the undisputed middleweight crown from Jermain Taylor, and the fact that he did it in the House That Gatti Built, Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, in front of a near-sellout crowd of crazed Ohioans who drove half a day to see "The Ghost," was more than a little bit symbolic. Pavlik could be huge in New Jersey, he could be a star at Madison Square Garden, and his fearless style, guts, power, and skin pigmentation all add up to a guy who could become the face of HBO boxing over the next five or 10 years. He just needs to let someone else handle his household repair projects from now on.

8. Will the use of performance-enhancing drugs continue to increase or will boxing regulators crack down?

Not so many years ago, steroids were thought to be a non-issue for boxing, since the old school 'roids generally led to increased muscle mass, which is problematic for any boxer needing to make weight. But performance-enhancers have evolved, and they've evolved into a serious concern for the fight game. Everyone from Fernando Vargas to James Toney (twice) to Frans Botha to Roy Jones to Mariano Carrera to Orlando Salido to Omar Nino has failed a postfight drug test due to one performance-enhancing substance or another, and with recent as yet unsubstantiated accusations also flung at Shane Mosley, Jameel McCline, and Evander Holyfield, it's safe to say that these pharmaceuticals are increasingly tainting the fight game.

How does boxing eliminate this problem? It's a two-part process: Regulators need to catch the great majority of the offending parties, and they need to penalize them harshly enough to discourage future offenses. The first part is difficult, because the manufacturers tend to be a step ahead of the testers, able to keep creating new designer drugs that either don't register on tests or that can be eliminated from the fighter's system by fight time. But the second part isn't so difficult; commissioners simply aren't being the hardliners they need to be. When Toney (and opponent Danny Batchelder) tested positive in May, Toney got a 12-month suspension from the California commission ... which was then reduced to six months, a surprising show of leniency, considering it was his second offense. In boxing terms, six months off is nothing.

With soft responses like that one, it's hard to imagine performance-enhancing drug use subsiding. Chances are, this problem will have to continue to get a little bit worse before it gets better.

PHOTO BY MARC SEROTA/GETTY IMAGES

It's hard to understand why anybody would want to use steroids if they ended up looking like James Toney, who has twice been caught with performance-enhancing drugs in his system.

PHOTO BY ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES

Rau'Shee Warren pops Diego Hurtado with a right during the 2004 Olympic Box-Offs coming off his gold medal performance at the World Championships. Warren figures to make the United States squad again in 2008 and has a good chance of bringing a gold medal home from China as well.

9. Will an American boxer win a gold medal at the 2008 Olympics?

Most experts acknowledge that the U.S. amateur program is headed in the wrong direction overall, and that Cuba and the countries that used to make up the Soviet Union rate to have the most success at the Olympics in Beijing. But we're going to go ahead and predict that an American will win a gold in '08, and we're saying that because Rau'Shee Warren is the favorite to bring home the gold in the flyweight class.

Warren, who fought at light fly in the '04 Games as a 17-year-old, has valuable Olympic experience that should enable him to match up well with the older opponents he'll meet in Beijing, as his victory in the World Boxing Championships in early-November suggests. Welterweight Demetrius Andrade also won gold in that competition, marking himself as another fighter with medal potential, while light fly Luis Yanez and bantam Gary Russell Jr. seem to have realistic chances also.

Don't expect a repeat of the '76 or '84 teams. But a repeat of what happened in '92, '96, and '04 (one gold medal apiece) looks a lot more likely than what happened in 2000, when the American Olympic team sunk Down Under.

10. Will Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez III live up to its predecessors, and who will win?

This is almost as unfair a question as asking whether *The Godfather Part III* would live up to its predecessors. The first Vazquez-Marquez fight was at least an "A-," and the rematch has a good chance of being named Fight of the Year in next month's issue of THE RING. This was an exceptional first two-thirds of a trilogy, arguably the best we've seen since Zale-Graziano (remember, in Gatti-Ward, Barrera-Morales, and Ali-Frazier, the second fight was the weak one of the set). It's asking an awful lot of Vazquez and Marquez to expect the rubber match to be on par with the first two. Francis Ford Coppola didn't come close with the third *Godfather*. (In fact, some would say *Godfather III* would have been better off resembling Corrales-Castillo III—in other words, not happening.) Vazquez-Marquez III can't possibly be that disappointing. But the guess is that it will be the least spectacular fight of the series.

The reasoning is two-fold, both relating to Marquez: First, if the second fight taught him anything, it's that he needs to be boxing behind his jab against the stronger, sturdier, bigger Vazquez. If Marquez does that, we're not going to see the slugfest we need to see for this bout to rival the action of the first two. And second, Marquez' ability to take a punch, never his strong suit, appears to be diminishing. Like Zale-Graziano III, this fight has the slight possibility of being the brief, one-sided match of the trilogy. And even if Marquez jabs and plays it cautious the way he ought to, his lead is never going to be safe against a big-hearted, heavy-handed guy like Vazquez. That's why the defending champ is the pick to win again, in a fight that will have its exciting moments, but will inevitably come up short when compared to the battles that preceded it. ■

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Whether or not Israel Vazquez is still the junior featherweight world champion after his rubber match with Rafael Marquez remains to be seen, but while we're pretty safe in predicting another good fight, it might not be quite as good as the first two.

A LIGHTWEIGHT MESS

THE CLEAN-UP CAN BE THE FUN PART

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY JOHN BOOZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Joel Casamayor (middle) is the reigning RING lightweight champion, but there is much dispute as to whether or not he's actually the best 135-pounder in the world, especially after winning a highly controversial decision over Jose Santa Cruz in November. Popular and undefeated WBA/IBF titleholder Juan Diaz (below) would be favored to beat Casamayor, and so would Manny Pacquiao (left) if he were to move up from the junior lightweight division.

By Joseph Santoliquito

The swollen, bruised slits that were Joel Casamayor's eyes spoke louder than anything the world lightweight champion had to say following his controversial 12-round split decision over Jose Santa Cruz on the Miguel Cotto-Shane Mosley pay-per-view card at Madison Square Garden. Clearly, his eyes were in need of medical attention, but

Casamayor's reputation had taken an even worse beating.

Yes, the proud Cuban expatriate had finally made his first defense of the world title he won by beating Diego Corrales over a year prior, but it was far from a glorious return to action. In fact, the ugly, contentious manner in which Casamayor struggled to keep THE RING belt around his waist gave added credence to the growing opinion that number-one contender and WBA/IBF titleholder Juan Diaz is currently the best 135-pounder in the world.

Casamayor's shaky position atop the lightweight division is also encouraging news for contenders beyond "The Baby Bull" from Houston, Texas. The weight class is in a transitional stage, with other contenders such as WBC beltholder David Diaz, Nate Cambell, Michael Katsidis, Anthony Peterson, and Santa Cruz all believing that the championship is within their reach.

Even though it is a division without a true superstar, the wide-open field has given it a dash of panache and a little something for everyone: volume punchers in Juan and David Diaz, a dangerous and unpredictable veteran in Cambell, a rangy tactician in Santa Cruz, a Gatti-like gladiator in Katsidis, and a rising young star in Peterson. And, perhaps most intriguingly, an X-factor in Manny Pacquiao.

It is Pacquiao, if he decided to move up from the 130-pound class, who could bring the really big money to the division. And in the wake of his narrow escape against Santa Cruz, it was "Pac-Man" who was foremost on Casamayor's mind.

"That's the fight that I want, I want to fight Pacquiao," said the 36-year-old Spanish-speaking Casamayor through manager Luis De Cubas Jr. after the Santa Cruz fight.

Despite the untidy and inconclusive nature of the fight, Casamayor was surprisingly animated afterward, seemingly as oblivious to the boos that greeted his victory as he was to his marked-up eyes and a forehead so swollen that it jutted out like a small rocky cliff from a mountaintop.

"Santa Cruz is a good fighter," said Casamayor. "But I did feel a little rusty. I haven't fought in 13 months. I can say that I'm not pleased, but I felt I did enough to win. I want to fight Pacquiao next, but anyone at lightweight is good for me. I want to fight regularly again, so anyone in front of me doesn't matter."

Does that include Juan Diaz?

"I would love to fight Juan Diaz," he answered. "I think I beat a better fighter in Santa Cruz. He was a harder guy to fight, tall and lanky. Juan Diaz would be easy for me. He comes straight forward and he's short. He'd stand right in front of me and start banging. That's good for me."

Maybe, but you would be hard-pressed to find too many people outside of Team Casamayor in agreement, because at this time, the lightweight division is stuck in one of those uncomfortable positions when the champion does not appear to be its best fighter. But championships are not won on opinion; they are won in the ring, and you would think that Juan Diaz, 33-0 (17), would be eager to try to clear things up by fighting Casamayor. Willie Savannah, Juan Diaz' manager, doesn't foresee a Casamayor-Juan Diaz showdown anytime soon, however.

"Why?" Savannah asked incredulously. "Casamayor looked so bad against Santa Cruz, I actually felt sorry for him. It wasn't good for boxing. He looked old and washed-up. And this is the same man who has been calling out Juan for years. Who's going to want to see Casamayor fight again? I don't think HBO or Showtime would be interested, so I can't really see that fight happening."

If Casamayor-Juan Diaz doesn't take place, however, there are still a

BAD FIGHT, WORSE DECISION

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Santa Cruz twists Casamayor's head with a right

Maybe judges Frank Lombardi and Ron McNair saw something virtually nobody on press row or in the crowd of 17,135 that came to Madison Square Garden saw. Whatever it was they saw, the two judges' interpretation of what took place inside the ring sent a shockwave throughout boxing, because after 12 boring rounds, Lombardi and McNair somehow each gave defending world lightweight champion Joel Casamayor a 114-113 decision over Jose Santa Cruz.

Tony Paolillo, the third judge, scored it 114-113 for Santa Cruz, while THE RING saw in favor of Santa Cruz by a wide 118-109 margin.

It was a dreadfully painful fight to watch, with Santa Cruz, 25-3 (14), Lincoln Heights, California, stalking, and Casamayor, 35-3-1 (21), seemingly content to hold and stall. Referee Steve Smoger, who usually does an excellent job, did next to nothing to curtail the Cuban's persistent clinching. All in all, the bout presented fans with the prefect opportunity to get a beer or a dog or visit the bathroom.

"Sometimes the crowd and the media aren't always right," said Joe Goossen, Casamayor's trainer, when asked about the reaction to the announced result. "I thought Joel showed more skill and paced himself really well, considering we trained seven weeks for this and we're talking about a 36-year-old. Joel came in in great shape. He was the more skilled, more effective fighter."

Casamayor, 134½, may have been the more effective fighter in the third and sixth rounds (the two rounds he won on THE RING's scorecard). Otherwise, Santa Cruz looked to be the more effective fighter, scoring a flash knockdown in the first, when he threw a left that caught Casamayor's elbow and caused him to lose his balance and fall backward.

By the sixth round, Santa Cruz, 134¾, had switched to a southpaw style, matching Casamayor's left-handed stance, and appeared to be even more effective. None of that, however, swayed Lombardi and McNair.

"I can't change what the judges saw. I only go by with how I fought, and I thought I won," Casamayor said.

New York State Athletic Commission Chairman Ron Scott Stevens was also unhappy with the scoring, and said he would talk with all three judges, including Paolillo, about their criteria for scoring rounds. How much good that will do remains to be seen. The NYSAC recently conducted several seminars on how to judge a fight, but if the three men who judged the Casamayor-Santa Cruz fight were in attendance, they clearly weren't paying very close attention.

—J.S.

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Santa Cruz clips Casamayor with a right hand during their lightweight championship bout at Madison Square Garden. Although practically everybody, except two of the three judges, thought he won, officially, Santa Cruz suffered the third loss of his career.

number of attractive scenarios at 135. Maybe Juan Diaz could take on David Diaz in an alphabet unification. Of course, boxing politics will also come into play.

According to Savannah, Juan Diaz has one more fight under his current contract with Don King, and it has to be made before March 31, 2008. King's stable is thinner these days than at any time in memory, and Juan Diaz remains one of his few viable attractions. David Diaz, on the other hand, is promoted by Top Rank, and King and Bob Arum usually only do business when there's so much money involved it would be stupid not to, which is not the case with Diaz vs. Diaz. Still, if it were up to Juan, he'd like to unify all the alphabet straps, and that means fighting David.

"That's a possibility," Savannah said. "That's why this gets really frustrating. Listen, we've tried fighting Casamayor, and if anyone out there sees him as the champion, that's fine. We don't feel we have to prove a point against him. The lack of respect Juan has received used to get under my skin. But we have the IBF, WBA, and WBO belts. We are recognized as the best in the world. David Diaz is the guy we'd like to fight. Hey, we just saw Santa Cruz beat Casamayor and didn't get the decision, so in our minds, Casamayor isn't the world champion."

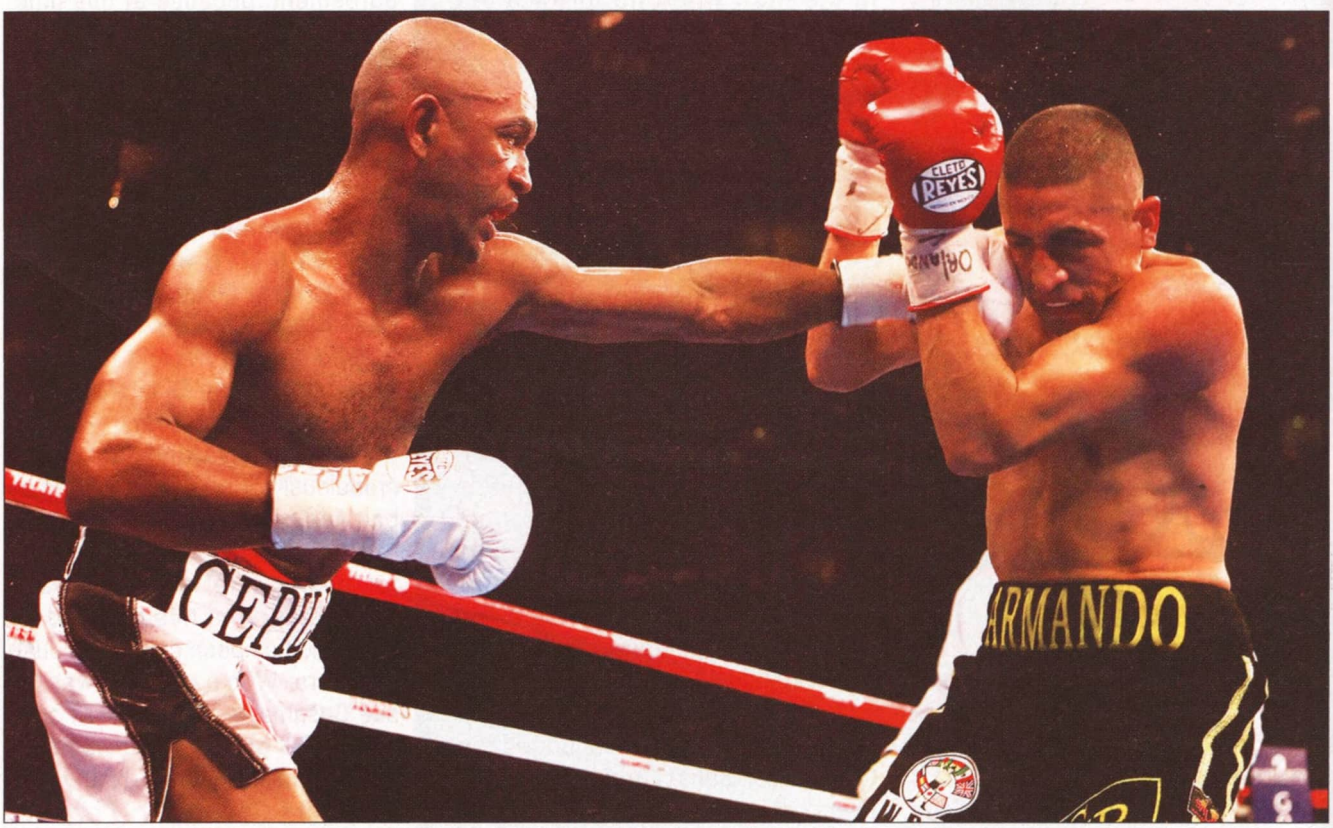


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

On the rare occasions when Casamayor did mount an attack against Santa Cruz, he was effective. Unfortunately, his spurts of offense were so infrequent, it is difficult to understand how anybody thought he won. Exactly how much Casamayor's 13-month layoff affected him is tough to know.

PHOTOS BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

After Santa Cruz' strong showing against Casamayor, David Diaz becomes a much more attractive player in the lightweight mix. Santa Cruz had dominated David Diaz for nine rounds in August 2006 (above), before Diaz landed a left uppercut and stopped him (below), changing both his career path and the current state of the lightweight division.

"If I'm Juan Diaz, I might want to fight Santa Cruz because that would take any credibility away from Casamayor, if Diaz beats Santa Cruz decisively, something Casamayor did not do," said HBO ringside analyst Max Kellerman, who has been slow to recognize Diaz' ability. "Juan is a better boxer than Santa Cruz. He throws more punches, while Santa Cruz has the height and the reach going for him. It's a great TV fight. If Juan Diaz wants to answer critics like me, let him beat the guy who essentially beat the world champion. No one really cares about Casamayor. Everyone cares about Juan Diaz because he is the de facto champion. I never thought Juan Diaz would be this good. I underestimated how good he's become."

Just as Kellerman originally underestimated Juan Diaz, there is a possibility that Casamayor might not actually be as far gone as he looked against Santa Cruz. In fairness to the former Olympic gold medalist, the meddlesome ways of the WBC stymied and quite possibly even instigated the longest layoff of Casamayor's career.

"We had to play their games," said De Cubas. "They wanted us to face someone we didn't want to face (Acelino Freitas), and for Joel to come back against someone like Santa Cruz, after not fighting for over a year, says something to me. Santa Cruz was a tough guy and we beat

him. We were forced into this. We didn't think the layoff would hurt Joel this much. A lot of people had Joel losing, and a lot of people had Joel winning. People are jumping all over Joel now, but the bottom line is that Joel won the fight."

Although Juan Diaz now holds the belt the WBC stripped from Casamayor, legal action persuaded the Mexico-based organization to sanction the Casamayor-Santa Cruz bout for its so-called "interim" title, which was meaningless since the linear and genuine world championship was on the line. But the WBC's involvement has added another twist to the convoluted situation by ordering an immediate Casamayor-Santa Cruz rematch.

The problem is that not only did their first fight result in a horrible decision, it was also a horrible fight. Savannah could very well be correct in assuming that no major network would be interested in buying the rematch, regardless of its potential to clarify matters. Still, Santa Cruz' stock (and RING ranking) rose in defeat, which was hardly the case when he lost of David Diaz in August 2006. Ahead by scores of 88-83 (twice) and 87-84, Santa Cruz got careless in the 10th round, which resulted in Diaz catching him flush with a paralyzing left uppercut and knocking him out.

Diaz' come-from-behind victory against Santa Cruz invigorated his career, and he capitalized by winning a close decision over a faded but famous Erik Morales in August 2007. Suddenly, Diaz, perceived as a highly beatable titleholder, was on damned near everybody's hit list.

Like every other 135-pounder, David Diaz' best bet for a huge payday would be a match with Pacquiao, and if the Filipino dynamo does move up, the fact that both he and David are promoted by Top Rank should make it a relatively easy match to make. Still, there is also the possibility of Pacquiao opting to go right to the head of the class and challenge Casamayor, now fighting under the Golden Boy banner, which just so happens to co-promote Pacquiao along with Top Rank.

"We figure on that happening," said the ever-pessimistic Savannah. "No matter what we do or who we fight, Juan isn't going to get the fights he deserves. That's just our feeling. I just can't see Pacquiao fighting Juan. I wish that it would happen, but it's something I can't see happening. If it does happen, and say Juan wins, it'll be that Juan was too big for Pacquiao. If we beat Casamayor, it will be that Juan beat an old man past his prime. I just don't think Juan will ever get the respect he deserves."

Actually, Juan gets plenty of respect, especially from the fans who love his all-action style, but it's easy to understand Savannah's frustration with the fragmented state of affairs. And when you add Campbell and Katsidis to the mix, things become either more complicated, or more interesting, depending on your point of view.

If Pacquiao is the X-factor, then Katsidis, 23-0 (20), is the wildcard. The Australian was involved in two Fight of the Year candidates in 2007, stopping Graham Earl in five rounds in February, after coming off the canvas in the second round, and then decisioning Czar Amonsot in a July slugfest.

Katsidis' TV-friendly style makes him arguably the world's most exciting lightweight. He reminds some of Gatti and others of Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini, based on his ability to soak up punishment, keep coming, and turn things around.

A Juan Diaz-Katsidis fight, which was made as this issue went to press, is risky for both, but also a potentially explosive confrontation that any TV network that cares anything about boxing would be happy to broadcast. Katsidis has the firepower to stay with all of today's lightweight, but his porous defense, especially against the accurate, volume punching of Juan Diaz, makes him vulnerable.

The quirky, undisciplined Campbell, 31-5-1 (25), is still waiting in the wings after winning two IBF eliminators. The 35-year-old "Galaxxy Warrior" runs hot and cold, but on his best nights is capable of pulling an upset, and just might be the best single-shot puncher in the division. He would be an excellent test and a sizable step up for the unbeaten Peterson, 25-0 (18), but also a risk that Peterson's brain trust would probably rather avoid at this juncture.

While the lightweight class is obviously in a state of flux, it is also a division ripe with potentially good fights because there is no dominant figure. Even so, regardless of the direction the individual fighters take, anybody who wants universal recognition will have to knock Casamayor off the throne. He sure looked ready to go against Santa Cruz, but if De Cubas is correct, they might be playing right into the hands of the cagey old champion.

"Joel has THE RING world championship," reminded De Cubas. "He didn't look spectacular against Santa Cruz. Maybe now we can get someone instead of everyone running away from Joel."

But if the manager is wrong and Casamayor really is as washed-up as he looked against Santa Cruz, any of the candidates under discussion here should be able to supplant him. If that happens, let's just hope it isn't by a controversial decision. ■

PHOTO BY DOUG BENC/GETTY IMAGES

In one of his better performances, inconsistent but dangerous Nate Campbell handed Almazbek "Kid Diamond" Raiymkulov his first pro defeat by stopping him in the 10th round.

PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

With the 135-pound weight class wide open, Australian Michael Katsidis, pictured en route to a thrilling TKO of Graham Earl in February 2007, has a puncher's chance with anybody in the division. Moreover, he has the slam-bam style that fans and TV networks love.

A FEROCIOUS FAREWELL

VARGAS LEADS WITH HIS HEART TILL THE END

By Ivan Goldman
PHOTOS BY JAN SANDERS

Fernando Vargas' last fight, a losing effort against maniacal Ricardo Mayorga, was an apt finale for his career. It fell short of his hopes, but the fans still loved him, and everyone went home entertained.

"I hope he's true to his word, that he is retiring," said retired promoter Don Fraser, whose concern for Vargas' health was widely shared across the boxing community. Vargas declared before and after the fight that it would be his last.

But in this game a proclamation of retirement is no more reliable than a jalopy with a bad starter. For example, ringside at the Staples Center in Los Angeles

A Mayorga right hand sends Vargas reeling backward in the 11th round of their entertaining brawl. A split-second later, Vargas crashed to the canvas for the second time, which cemented the decision in Mayorga's favor.

for "The Brawl" (appropriately titled, as it turned out) was former Vargas opponent Felix Trinidad. Trinidad, taking a break from camp before a January 19 date with Roy Jones, is a serial back-from-retirement fighter whose departure announcements are material for late-night comics.

But "El Feroz" may well keep his word, and evidence piles up that he should. He's lost three in a row. His last victory was a decision over the aging Javier Castillejo in August 2005, and he hasn't stopped anyone since taking out journeyman Tony Marshall in December 2003. Vargas' aggression and fearlessness earned him respect, but also took a toll on him physically. Though he showed decent endurance and other qualities against Mayorga, Vargas barely resembled the young lion who stopped hard-hitting Yory Boy Campas nine years earlier, winning the IBF light middleweight title at the tender age of 21.

And though Vargas had yet to reach his 30th birthday when he lost a majority decision to Mayorga, there were plenty of miles on his tank treads, including vicious kayo losses to Trinidad and Oscar De La Hoya that were so graphic and compelling, they tend to overshadow his triumphs.

Too often it's forgotten that in his march through the pros, Vargas decisioned rugged Ike Quartey, for example, and when he won a disputed majority decision over Winky Wright in 1999, he didn't get the credit he deserved because Wright's abilities were barely known at the time. Instead of noticing Wright's talent, critics asked why Vargas failed to dominate him.

So Vargas, 26-5 (22), has been stiffed by lady luck more than once, but he also brought misfortune upon himself, notably when he pleaded no-contest to a conspiracy felony for his role in a 1999 assault in which the victim was beaten with a golf club and other implements. The 90-day sentence could have been much stiffer.

Throughout his career Vargas thrived on his reputation as a tough kid out of a tough place—Oxnard, California, a blue-collar oil port just north of Los Angeles, where, at La Colonia Boxing Club he learned to refashion his streetfighting skills into a driving amateur style that propelled him all the way to the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

But Vargas the amateur always had what's generally described as a professional style, meaning simply that he hit harder than most. He could box too, staying in the pocket and inflicting damage while slipping what came at him.

After the Olympics, he signed with Shelly Finkel, a manager with a close relationship with the Main Events promotional company. Vargas stayed with Main Events and Finkel down through the years. He said he now plans to do some promoting himself.

In 1998, Main Events surprised the fight community when it put Vargas, with only 14 pro outings under his belt, in against Campas. Fighters of Vargas' pedigree are ordinarily brought along a few inches at a time. Eventually, we learned quite a bit more about the effort that went into landing that title shot. Dino Duva, who had taken over Main Events after the death of his brother Dan, testified under immunity that he paid then-IBF President Bob Lee $25,000 to make Vargas the mandatory contender. Lee was found guilty and sentenced to prison for money laundering, tax evasion, and interstate travel to aid in racketeering, all felony counts related to that testimony.

When Vargas had a relatively easy time outslicking Campas, making him

Mayorga's Sitting Pretty

Ricardo Mayorga has a bright future for a 34-year-old fighter who loves to smoke and drink and has lost three out of his last six.

The villain so many fans love to hate fought a spirited battle against Vargas and won it fair and square. Analysts are always pointing out Mayorga swings wildly and leaves himself open, but rarely mention that he mixes in straight, hard punches that can drill holes in people. It may not be a textbook style, but it's confusing, and Mayorga still packs the kind of punch that brought him to everyone's attention when he kayoed Vernon Forrest in 2003.

Yes, Mayorga's willing to take a punch to get one in, but his defense is not always as porous as it's made out to be. Besides, the man can take a pretty good shot. Vargas was the bigger man, the hometown boy bested by the smaller guy who parachuted in from over the horizon.

Villainy, when it's done right, sells. And some of the stuff Mayorga pulls you can't learn in clown school. At the postfight news conference, while Vargas was already eating his way back toward 260-plus, Mayorga, 29-6-1 (23), was trying to bum a cigarette.

He said he wants to compete at junior middleweight, where a third match with Vernon Forrest could spark interest, or at welterweight, where, for the right price, he might find opponents such as Miguel Cotto, Paul Williams, Ricky Hatton.

Vargas got off to a bad start when Mayorga rushed out and unleashed a furious barrage in the opening round. It looked momentarily as if it would be over practically before it got started, but Vargas picked himself up and fought back.

quit on his stool after seven rounds, Team Vargas looked astute for failing to follow the standard measured pace. Why move your fighter slowly when he can do it all now? The night of his victory the elated new titleholder slept with his belt at his side.

But on December 2, 2000, five days before his 23rd birthday, Vargas, then 20-0 (18), put his title on the line in a unification match against WBA titleholder Trinidad, who was 38-0 (31) going in and known for phenomenal one-punch kayo power in either hand. By the end of the contest, Team Vargas' headlong rush to greatness didn't look quite so thoughtful. It was one of the most grueling mega-fights of the last decade. Chief trainer Eduardo Garcia and referee Jay Nady watched Vargas take a hellacious beating until Nady finally called a halt in round 12. Vargas had been down five times, Trinidad once, and both had been penalized for low blows that included a vicious foul by Trinidad in round four that stopped Vargas' momentum dead—and not just in that particular match. Vargas would never be the same fighter again.

Mayorga can now look forward to more lucrative purses

Probably the most widely known fact about Vargas was his irrational, almost psychotic loathing for fellow Southern Californian De La Hoya. Vargas had taken the risky fight against Trinidad partly to show up his arch-nemesis, "The Golden Boy."

Unlike Vargas, De La Hoya's career was moved along in standard, measured fashion—with great, great success. The experienced Fraser said he could name no other fighter whose list of opponents was managed as perfectly as De La Hoya's. And there's not a chance in hell that Bob Arum and Bruce Trampler, Oscar's promoter and chief matchmaker at the time, would have put him

In the meantime, perhaps someone will teach Mayorga there are ways to get himself primed for action that don't involve insulting the virtue of his opponents' female relations. If he toned down his act at least a tad, he could still sell tickets and no doubt get more of his countrymen behind him. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, when De La Hoya knocked him out in 2006, revelers celebrated with fireworks in Mayorga's hometown of Managua.

—I.G.

in with a devastating machine like Trinidad at a comparable stage in his career. Oscar, four years older than Vargas, was 26 when he faced down Trinidad, losing a majority decision in Las Vegas that still gives off a powerful odor (Trinidad was promoted by Don King).

Vargas viewed De La Hoya as a silver spoon boxer, a "fake," not a "true Mexican," someone he needed to destroy so he could establish justice and find peace. Fact is, De La Hoya's childhood circumstances in the East L.A. barrio were no better than Vargas' and very possibly worse. But it was impossible to explain that to ferocious Vargas, whose obsession earned him plenty of extra media attention on his way up. Vargas was a clever kid who writers learned could always be counted on for a creative, nasty comment about superstar De La Hoya.

There have been plenty of super rivalries in this, the most personal of sports. Marvin Hagler's contempt for Sugar Ray Leonard, for instance. But it was patty-cake compared to Vargas' dramatic hatred for Oscar.

As Advertised

The most surprising element was that Ricardo Mayorga and Fernando Vargas were able to go at such a fast clip for 12 rounds. There were lulls, and both warriors looked exhausted at times, but they always managed to pick up the pace again. One man would throw something heavy, the other would react, and they were off to the races. Combinations were the rule, with plenty of counterpunching.

Both of Mayorga's knockdowns were clean and legitimate, ultimately making it impossible to score the fight for Vargas. In the first round, Vargas succumbed to a ferocious flurry that had him hurt and addled. In round 10, Vargas was caught off-balance by a Mayorga right hand and, while "El Feroz" was not really hurt, pouncing at the right time and keeping your balance are key elements of the game.

You knew this brawl was going to live up to its billing when Vargas, after getting up in the first round, scored with a terrific, punishing jab at the bell. It gave Mayorga something to remember during the rest period, but he came right back in round two looking for the kayo. He landed a brutal right hand that won the round for him. Round three was very close, and, like the first two, action-packed. Vargas was cornered on the ropes a while, but probably just resting because he blasted his way out with intelligent shots, looking, at least for a while, like a younger version of himself.

Vargas and Mayorga give fans their money's worth

By round four, Vargas was more relaxed and in control and stayed in the zone for rounds five and six, with Mayorga's shots losing some of their sting. But by round seven, a cut over Vargas' left eye was looking serious. Referee Raul Caiz Sr. didn't seem to mind that cutman Miguel Diaz applied so much petroleum jelly it sometimes looked like he'd dipped Vargas' head in a bucket of the stuff.

Another big surprise came at the start of round nine, when Mayorga apologized to Vargas for a flurry after the bell ending round eight. By the last round, Vargas was lunging desperately and Mayorga had more left.

Judges Glen Trowbridge and Max DeLuca saw it 114-112 and 115-111, respectively, for Mayorga. David Mendoza had it 113-113. THE RING scored it 114-112, Mayorga.

—I.G.

Brave Vargas rallied in the middle rounds and nailed Mayorga with some hard shots, such as this left hook. But "El Feroz" faded down the stretch and was unable to emerge triumphant in what most hope was be his final fight.

So when he finally goaded De La Hoya into a match and then was kayoed, Vargas, who'd placed all his chips on one number, saw them swept off the table. If De La Hoya wasn't the scared, spoiled ballerina Vargas needed him to be, then where was Vargas' place in the universe?

But it was that very personal style, combined with his in-your-face ring aggression, that earned Vargas so many fans' hearts. That's why he was still able to draw 10,365 fans when he faced down Mayorga. Mayorga's serial propensity to insult his opponents' masculinity and the virtue of their female family members made him the perfect villain. Not surprisingly, he and Vargas exchanged blows at a prefight news conference. A Plexiglas barrier was placed between them for their remaining joint appearances.

After his fights, win or lose, Mayorga always seems to apologize for his vicious comments and explains he needs to hurl insults to put him in the right frame of mind. After their spirited, action-filled bout, Vargas and Mayorga complimented each other's abilities and embraced, though Vargas' wife appeared less forgiving. The original fight date of September 8 had been postponed so Vargas could overcome an iron deficiency. There were many months of insults.

As Vargas and Mayorga sat together on a podium (Plexiglas required no longer), Vargas exhibited a behavior that may have damaged his performances as much as the Trinidad and De La Hoya fights: He was eating. Vargas' personal trainer Robert Ferguson, sitting next to him, revealed that at the start of camp Vargas weighed in at 264 pounds, which explains why the agreed-upon catch weight started at 162 and kept moving higher. Eventually, both fighters weighed in at 165. How a fighter expects to eat himself into such a state, then take off 37 percent of his body weight in a crash program, and still perform as a world-class athlete is a puzzle.

Yet few fighters attain the kind of popularity Vargas still enjoys. You can bet that wherever he goes from here, he will be mightily cheered at ringside for many years to come, cheered like the warrior he was and also the great champion he might have been. ■

Ivan Goldman is THE RING's West Coast correspondent.

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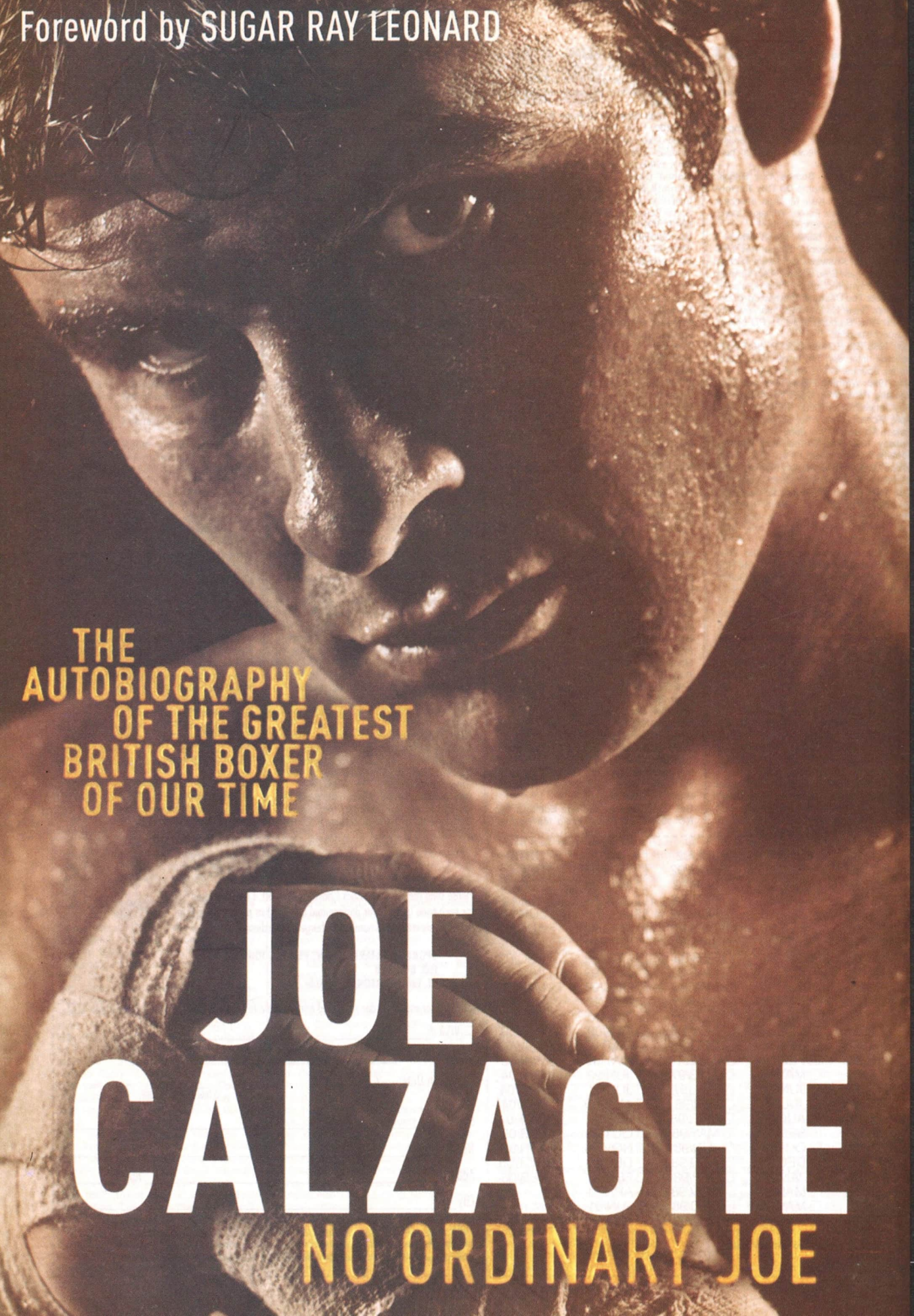
Foreword by SUGAR RAY LEONARD



THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF THE GREATEST BRITISH BOXER OF OUR TIME

JOE CALZAGHE

NO ORDINARY JOE

NO ORDINARY JOE

Exclusive Book Excerpt

In July 2006, Joe Calzaghe sat down with Brian Doogan, THE RING's European correspondent, to write his autobiography. No Ordinary Joe *was published in May 2007 by Century to widespread critical acclaim, reaching number three in the* Sunday Times *(London) bestsellers list for non-fiction. The following extract has been specially adapted for exclusive use by THE RING.*

•••

Philadelphia fighters are renowned for their toughness, a hard edge which almost sets them apart even in the macho world of boxing. Joe Frazier was the ultimate example of their fighting spirit but even the six-round preliminary guys from Philly fight hard because that's what they're bred to do in the gyms all across the city.

Charles Brewer lived up to this image when I returned to Cardiff's International Arena 12 months after stopping Germany's Mario Veit in one round, and I was made to realize why they called Brewer "The Hatchet." He was one of the hardest punchers I've ever fought and certainly one of the most rugged. Brewer still carried a .22 caliber bullet in his chest after being shot in a brawl in North Philadelphia 16 years earlier, so he couldn't have been anything other than tough.

Brewer was the IBF super middleweight titleholder when I won the WBO belt from Chris Eubank and had stopped Herol Graham, one of Britain's best middleweight boxers over the years, in 10

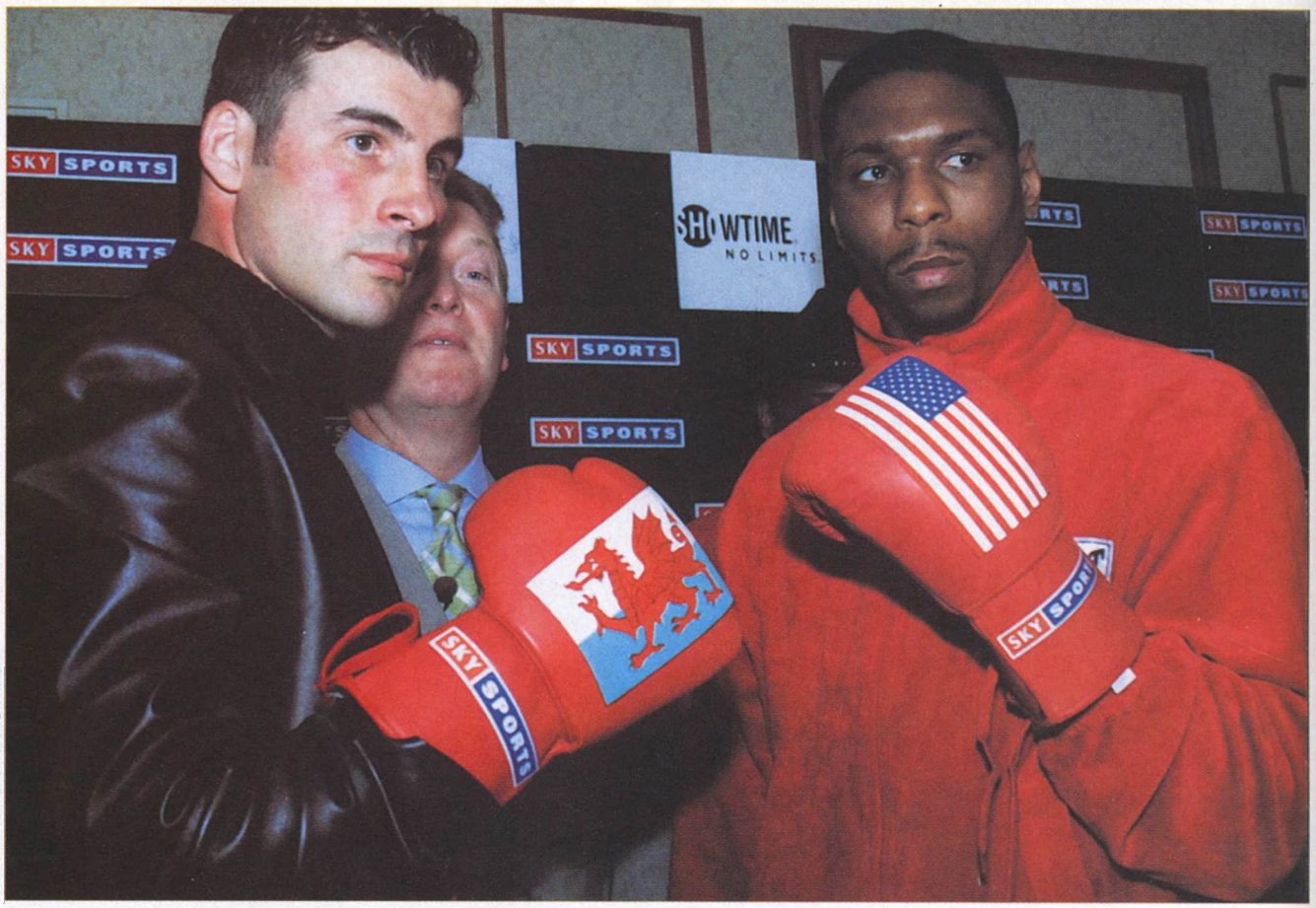


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Calzaghe and Charles Brewer pose prior to their April 2002 bout in Cardiff, Wales. Calzaghe could tell his foe was confident, and shortly after the match began, he understood why the Philly tough guy was nicknamed "The Hatchet."

rounds in 1998, but not before being floored twice himself. Sven Ottke of Germany beat him later that year in a controversial points decision, one of many that Ottke would come through in his five-year title reign. (Four months before I beat Byron Mitchell he had engaged in a WBA/IBF unification bout against Ottke in Germany and lost by a split decision on the judges' scorecards, but Muhammad Ali would have lost to Ottke in Germany. The German's promoters never showed an interest in trying to make a fight between us, two unbeaten rival champions, probably because they knew what would happen. They certainly knew after I stopped Mitchell in two rounds.) It's an interesting fact that in the nine years between my bouts with Jeff Lacy and Eubank the other titles in the super middleweight division changed hands among 19 different fighters. Glen Catley, the Bristol boxer I beat twice in the amateurs, even won the WBC belt for a brief spell. Brewer is one of six fighters I've fought who held versions of the title, so there can be no doubt that in the last decade I've proved myself to be the best fighter in my division. From the tapes I'd seen of Brewer, I reckoned that he was chinny, for he'd been stopped three times in 45 fights. As a middleweight, he got knocked out twice back-to-back, but he'd got his career going again and I could see his confidence when I went over to New York for a press conference with the American media. Fighters know, we can see it in each other's eyes, and I knew that Brewer would handle the intimidating atmosphere much better than Veit had.

In the opening 30 seconds he caught me with a hard left to the body, which slightly winded me. I didn't realize that he was a converted southpaw—a left-handed fighter, like myself, but he fought out of an orthodox stance—so he was able to land his left with real power. Bodyshots, in any case, are often harder to get over than punches to the chin because a good dig to the solar plexus will stay with you for a while. You can do as many sit-ups as you want but, if you're hit in the right area, you can't protect the vulnerable area of the solar plexus. There's no meat on your ribs and, if you're caught there, it stings for a while. There wasn't much in Brewer's right hand, but his left jab and left uppercut were seriously hard shots. I fought the wrong fight, for I should have boxed him, but once again I got drawn into the kind of slugging match that I can rarely resist if my opponent is up for it. I stayed in there and traded punches with him and that's the way that the fight progressed until he stunned me near the end of the seventh round when I walked onto his left hand after being caught by a couple of jabs. Doubling the uppercut, he hit me flush on the jaw and when the bell rang I came back to the corner, where I was assaulted almost as forcefully by my dad.

"Are you going to chuck this away?" he shouted at me, making things seem about 10 times worse than they were.

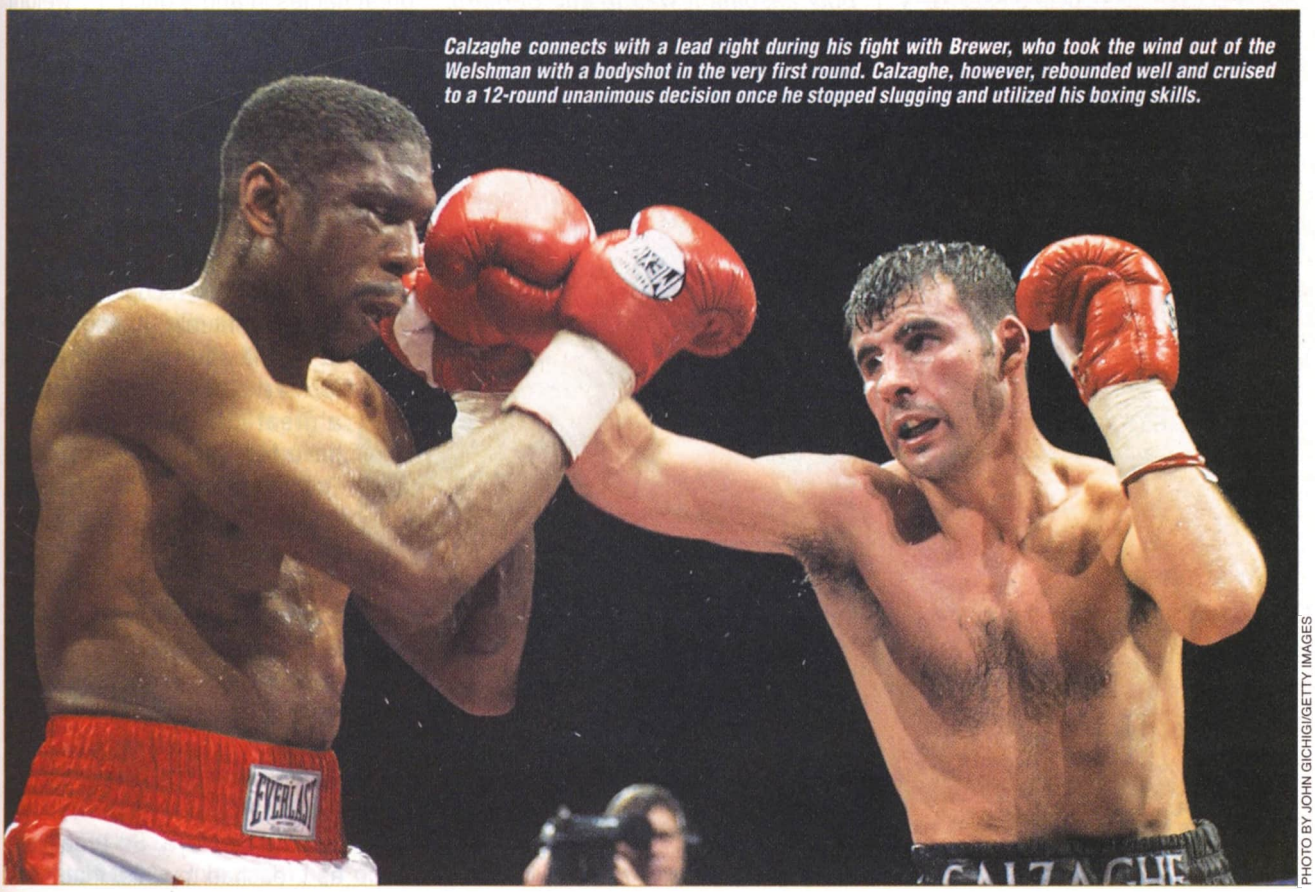
"Is it really that bad?" I asked him.

"It will be, if you get nailed like that again. Be clever and start boxing this guy. Don't let him draw you into a streetfight."

When Dad starts to get really animated I know I need to shift up a gear, and from the start of the eighth round I moved and boxed for the rest of the fight, and Brewer had no answer. So many times I fight the wrong fight, and that's what happened after the hard bodyshot he landed early. When I boxed him I made it easy for myself because he couldn't touch me. He was very heavy-legged, so he needed me to engage him, but I was too clever for that over the final rounds. I moved well to avoid his punches and won the fight comfortably.

"I used to look at my situation and compare it to Marvelous Marvin Hagler, a great champion who didn't have his biggest fights against Roberto Duran, Tommy Hearns, and Sugar Ray Leonard until he was in his 30s. The same with Hopkins. His situation was similar to mine. He was a long-reigning titleholder in the middleweight division, not really given a lot of credit."

Another Philadelphian was now in my sights, Bernard Hopkins, an excellent boxer who has proved himself over many years to be one of the best of his era. I respect him because he's been tremendously successful and he came up the hard way, struggling to get his dues until late in his career when he beat Felix Trinidad and Oscar De La Hoya and unified the middleweight division. He completed a record 20 successful title defenses before dropping two decisions against fellow American Jermain Taylor in 2005, then moved up to light heavyweight to win a second world title against Antonio Tarver. He's not the kind of opponent I usually like to fight, as he's a defensive-minded boxer, very cagey, and I've struggled against these types many times in the past. Although Hopkins is technically very good, Roy Jones was a much more exciting fighter to watch because he had fast hands and always showed more flair. I believe I would beat Hopkins, but I don't know if the gel would make for a good fight. We may still find out because Hopkins is not yet retired and I'd love to do the



Calzaghe connects with a lead right during his fight with Brewer, who took the wind out of the Welshman with a bodyshot in the very first round. Calzaghe, however, rebounded well and cruised to a 12-round unanimous decision once he stopped slugging and utilized his boxing skills.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

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fight. Back in 2002 a deal was agreed and we looked all set to fight at the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff. Then he walked away, which seems to be the story for me and big fights.

• • •

"A teleconference was set up in my office for July 30, 2002, and on the call was myself, Don King [then promoting Hopkins], who was in the room, Frank Warren [Calzaghe's promoter and manager], and Bernard Hopkins' lawyer, Arnold Joseph. Along with Arnold was a woman named Linda Carter, who was there on behalf of Bernard. We asked Arnold if Bernard wanted to fight Joe Calzaghe and we asked him how much he would want if he did. The response we got was $3-million and the fight would have to take place in the United States. After a little scratching of the head, we said, 'Okay, done.' Frank Warren agreed on the spot, Don King agreed, and we agreed, so as far as we were concerned all the parties were singing off the one hymn sheet. Arnold excused himself with Linda and I can only assume it was to call Bernard. Either that day or the next day, I'm just not certain about that particular timeframe, they came with a new demand: $6-million, double the sum that had been agreed. In addition to the Calzaghe fight, we had offered him $1-million to fight Morrade Hakkar and the winner of that bout to fight Harry Simon. Then he would have had the bout with Joe, but when he came back asking for $6-million the deal blew up. I thought that the Hopkins fight was a spectacular prospect, but it wasn't to be. Bernard's pretty shrewd, he's no dummy and has done a wonderful job of self-management in his career, but he had then and still has no desire to fight Joe Calzaghe, that much is pretty clear. Joe gets criticized sometimes for not having fought more big-name Americans, but in this case the fault has never rested with him."

—Jay Larkin, then Showtime TV Network's senior vice-president of sports and events programming

• • •

It was frustrating for me that fights against Jones and Hopkins, two of the great names in and around my weight division, never happened. I wasn't a big enough name in America for the likes of Jones and Hopkins to take the risk. I was too dangerous for my own good and I began to think that I would never get my career-defining fight, but I always hoped that the recognition would come eventually. I used to look at my situation and compare it to Marvelous Marvin Hagler, a great champion who didn't have his biggest fights against Roberto Duran, Tommy Hearns, and Sugar Ray Leonard until he was in his 30s. The same with Hopkins. His situation was similar to mine. He was a long-reigning titleholder in the middleweight division, not really given a lot of credit. He'd never beaten any great fighters until well into his 30s, when he got the big fights against Trinidad and De La Hoya. So I realized, as I reached my 30s, that there

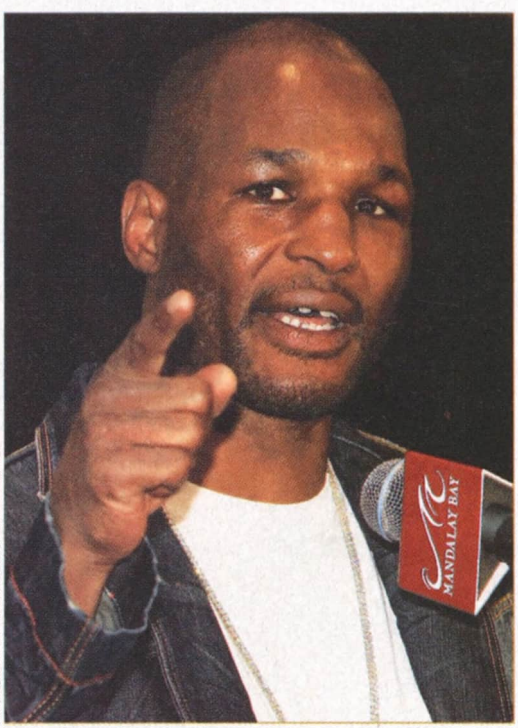
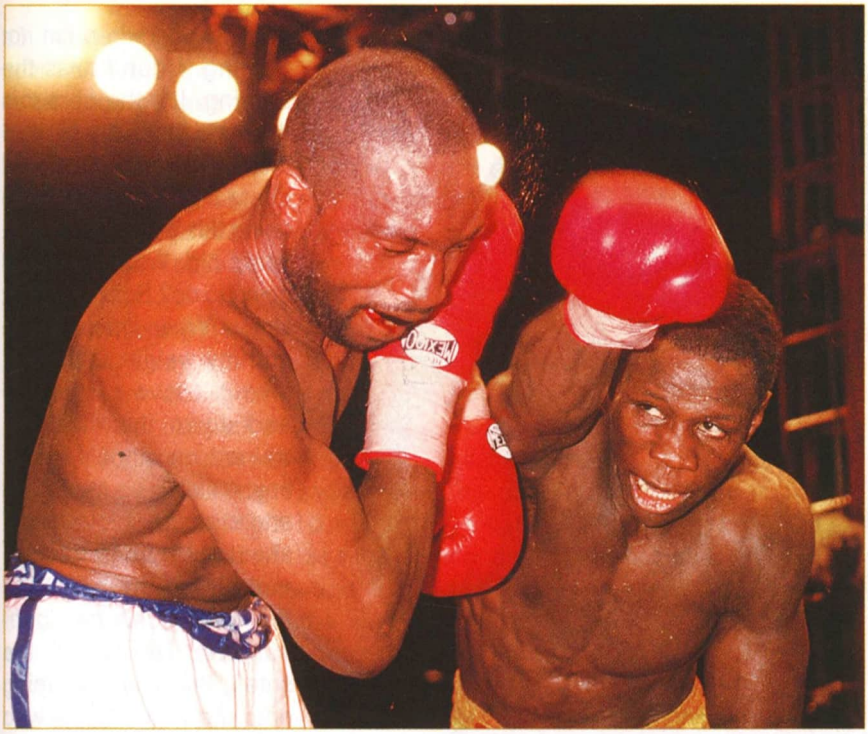


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Light heavyweight champion Bernard Hopkins addresses the media following his July 2007 victory over Winky Wright. Although a proposed 2002 fight between Calzaghe and Hopkins fell through, there is serious talk about them finally fighting each other in 2008.



Chris Eubank delivers a right hand during his thrilling 1993 bout with Nigel Benn that ended in a 12-round draw. Calzaghe, who beat a faded Eubank in 1997, has no desire to engage in this sort of vicious give-and-take war just to prove how tough he is.

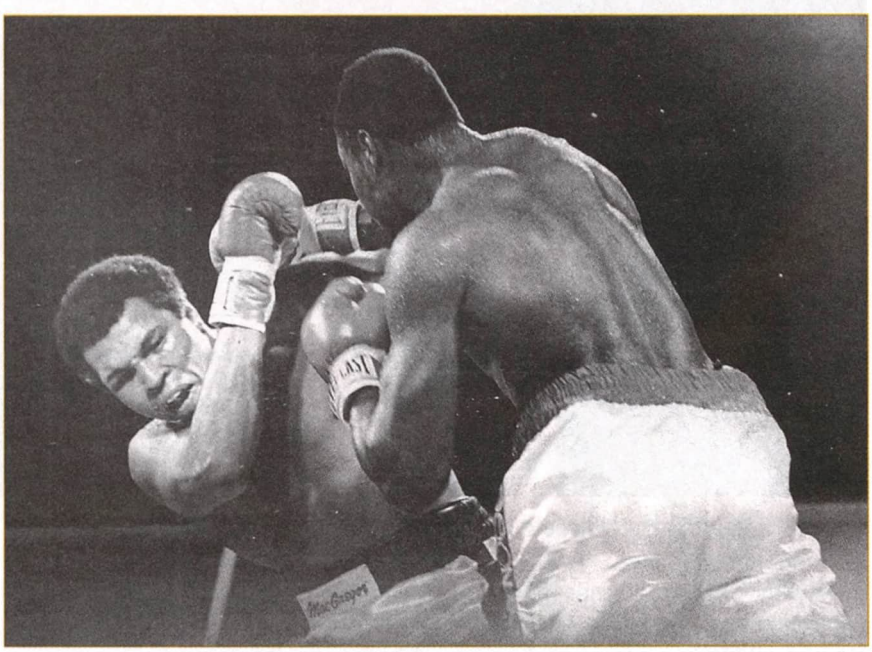
was still hope. All I could do was fight and keep winning.

• • •

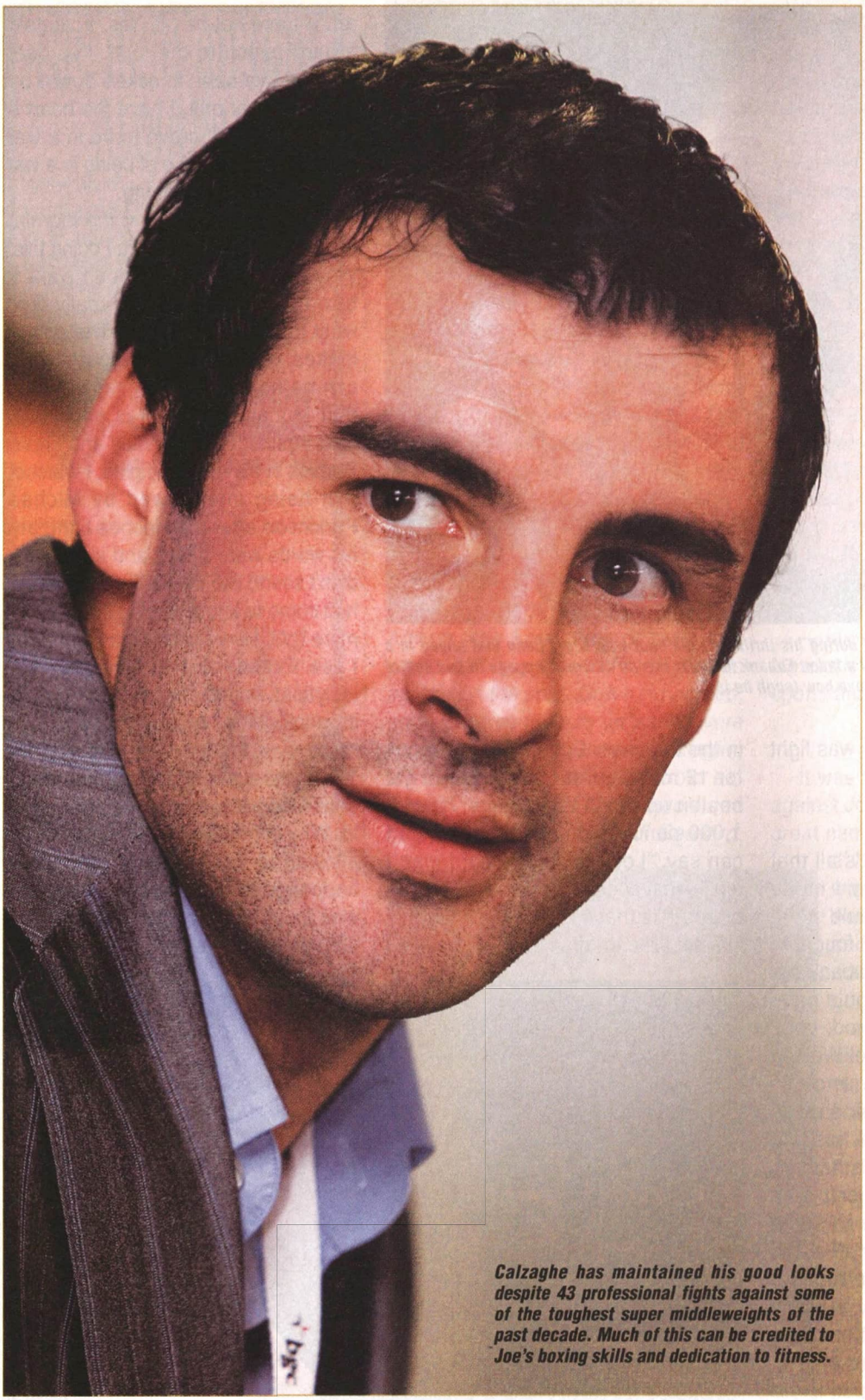
Winning is everything, it's all that matters to me. This is why I made my career in boxing. I could have earned more money if I had fought in the Nigel Benn and Chris Eubank era in the early-1990s, but I could have taken some beatings then too. Look at what happened to Michael Watson and to Gerald McClellan and the state Benn was in after their savage fight at the London Arena, pissing blood, unable to get out of a bathtub without being helped. I wouldn't want to be in a fight like that or in some of the wars Eubank was in. I've had hard fights, but nothing like those. I haven't had the same rivalry, but only because I've proved myself to be so much better than everyone else in the super middleweight division in the past decade.

To me, boxing is a sport. I don't step in the ring to damage my health or to do damage to someone else. I have no desire to come out pissing blood just so I can say that I fought in a war. I've had hard fights. I've had to go down in the trenches. Eubank gave me hell for 12 rounds. But I don't fight to get beaten up. I don't fight to get hit with 1,000 punches on my head just so I can say, "Look at what a hard man I am." What does that mean? What kind of boast is that? The reason I fight is simple: I like to win. I see boxing as an art. Hit and not be hit. Yes, I can take a hard punch to the chin, I've been cut and I've been knocked down, but I would never quit. I have the heart of a fighter. I don't crave to be in a war, however, for the sake of being in a war. It is simply about winning.

Sometimes I get up in the morning and I ask myself, "Why am I doing this? Why am I in boxing? I don't want to box. I'm bored with it all. I really don't want to do this anymore." The politics makes boxing a s___ sport and it can be horribly cruel. I can't believe that Muhammad Ali was allowed to fight against Larry Holmes and Trevor Berbick in his last two fights. I watched him being interviewed by Michael Parkinson after the Holmes fight, and his words were heavy and slurred. He didn't sound like the Ali the whole world had come to know. And he still had one more fight. How sickening is that? When I see Evander Holyfield, I feel sad. Holyfield won the world heavyweight championship, regained it, and he's made over $200-million in his career. Yet, at the age of 44, he's still boxing, continuing to get his head punched in. Why is he doing it? How can he be allowed to box when we know what happened to Ali and countless others who fought too long? Will they let him fight until he's walking and talking like



Larry Holmes batters an aging and depleted Muhammad Ali in 1980 in what turned out to be Ali's second-to-last bout. Calzaghe is dismayed by the number of great fighters who place themselves in peril by continuing to fight well past their prime.



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Calzaghe has maintained his good looks despite 43 professional fights against some of the toughest super middleweights of the past decade. Much of this can be credited to Joe's boxing skills and dedication to fitness.

Ali? In 10 years' time Holyfield might not know his own name.

Mickey Duff, my former manager, once told me a story about Joe Bugner. He was sitting in a sauna back at his hotel after challenging Ali for the world heavyweight title, and Mickey asked him why he hadn't really tried to win, he had only tried to survive. "Making the money is one thing," Joe replied. "Then I've got to be able to count it." When I'm retired I want to be able to do the same.

Would I retire now if I was financially secure? Possibly. I don't miss boxing when I'm not fighting. I don't miss the training. It's the boredom that gets the better of me. I miss doing something, and the reality is that I've been doing this since I was eight years old. What else am I going to do? Boxing is what I know. When I'm in training and my weight is down, I love it. I love running up and down the hills I've trained on since I was a boy, building up my fitness and stamina. I love going about my work in the gym and hitting the bags and the pads. *Bah-bah-bah-bah-bah.* The sound, the smell, the sweat dripping onto the floor, this is who I am. This is me. I find myself when I'm in the ring. I find contentment. It's what I'm good at and it gives me satisfaction knowing that I can make other people happy too. My kids are especially proud. Connor, my youngest son, says to me, "Dad, I don't want you to retire. I want you always to be world champion." As far as he's concerned, I'm the best fighter in the world. Superman.

I never think about the potential consequences of what I do. I'm aware of them. Every fighter is aware of them, but I don't dwell on the subject. That's my defensive mechanism perhaps. I look on boxing as an art. People who are ignorant only see the brutality, but if they were to sit down and watch proper boxing, they'd begin to appreciate the skill of being able to hit and not be hit. I'm proud that I've managed to keep my features intact. I'm proud that my face hasn't been smashed and that there's no scar tissue around my eyes. Why is that? Am I really that lucky? I don't believe

so. I'm just good at what I do. When I spar I always let the other fighter come to me and I get pleasure from making him miss, being slick and moving like a snake, outthinking him and making the right moves and having the nerve to execute all that in the ring against a live opponent. That's boxing and that's the art.

It's entertaining to watch two fighters pummeling away at one another, like Marvin Hagler and Tommy Hearns did in 1985 in the car park at the back of Caesars Palace, a tremendous fight, an absolute war. But I don't crave to be involved in that kind of fight. I don't want to be in a Muhammad Ali-Joe Frazier scenario where both winner and loser end up in the hospital and the winner describes it as "the closest thing to dying." When I get in the ring I just want to beat the man in front of me and come out unscathed myself. I don't want to be remembered as a crowd-pleaser, if it means that someday someone will treat me like a punchbag. Boxing's not important to the extent that I can't walk away from it. If I thought I was going to get hurt or hit about, I wouldn't do it.

Boxing is as safe as it's ever been, and in this country we are fortunate because the British Boxing Board of Control is excellent in the way it administrates the sport, making sure that doctors and anesthetists are ringside at every fight. Unfortunate things still happen, as they do in other sports, in motor sport, rugby, and even football. On the same day that I fought Sakio Bika in Manchester, the Chelsea goalkeeper, Petr Cech, was stretchered off and underwent surgery for a depressed fracture of the skull, and Carlo Cudicini, the substitute goalkeeper, had to be carried off as well, having been knocked unconscious. How many former rugby players are paraplegics because of a tackle or an accident that happened on the pitch? Thank God these things haven't happened to me. I understand that in boxing the purpose is to do damage, but I can only speak for myself and say honestly that I have never wanted to seriously hurt an opponent. I'm not violent, it's just the nature of what I do.

People jump on the bandwagon to ban boxing because we're inflicting

"To me, boxing is a sport. I don't step in the ring to damage my health or to do damage to someone else. I have no desire to come out pissing blood just so I can say that I fought in a war."

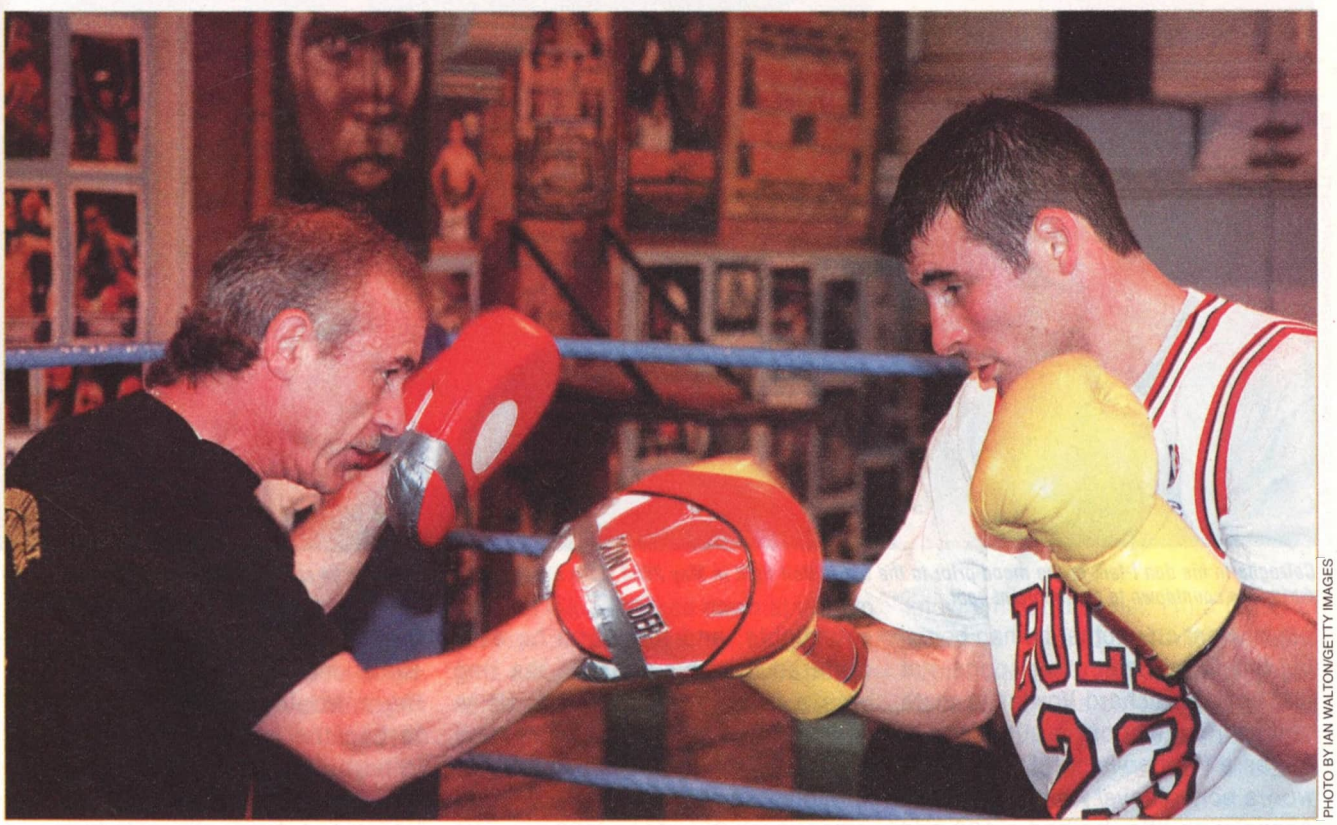

PHOTO BY IAN WALTON/GETTY IMAGES

A winning combination: Calzaghe works the pad with his father/trainer Enzo, who has been in his son's corner throughout his career. Joe also considers his father to be his best friend.

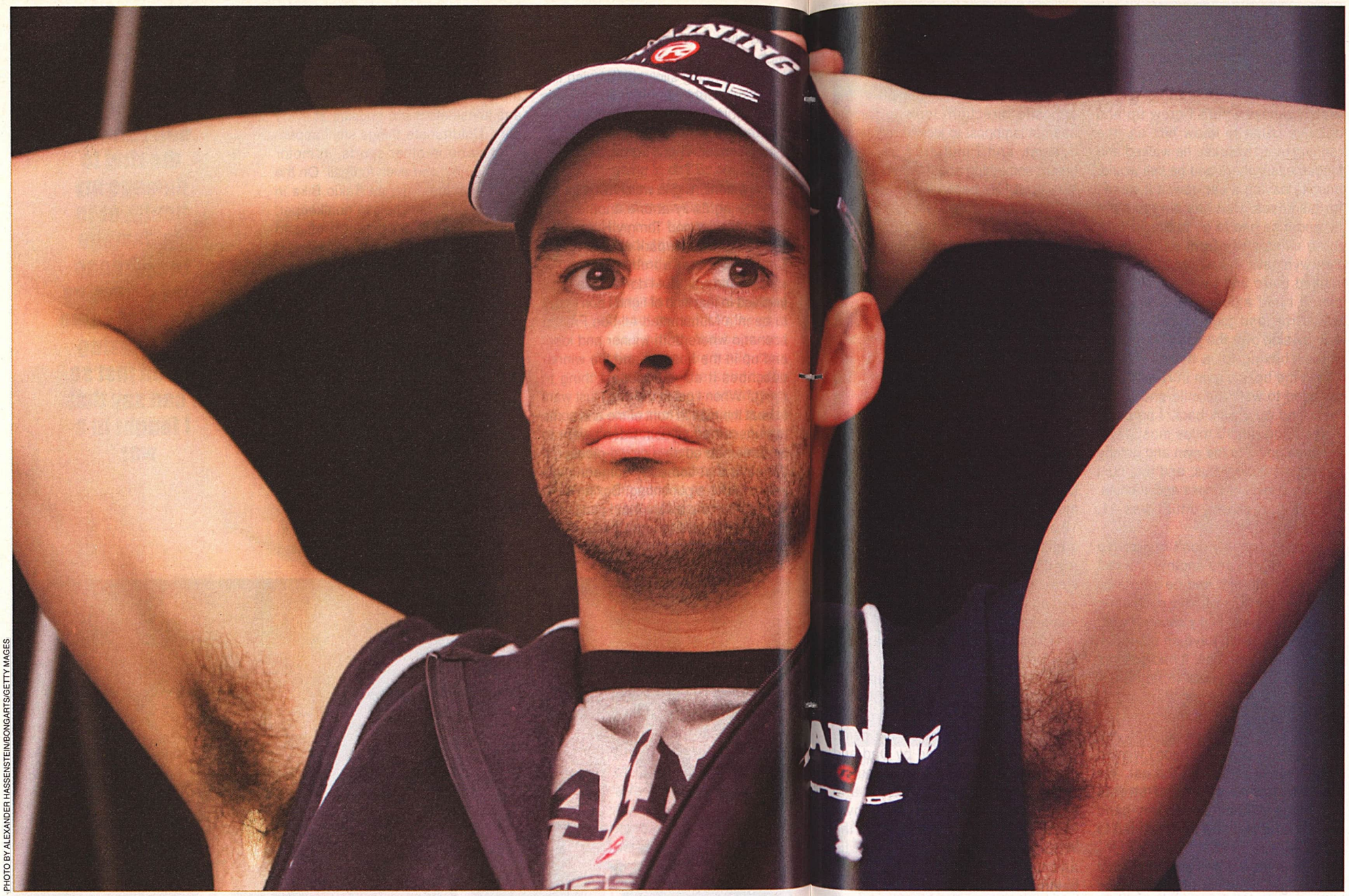

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Calzaghe in his don't-talk-to-me mood prior to the Mario Veit fight in May 2005. Like a lot of fighters, Joe can be temperamental at times, especially during the countdown to an important bout.

punishment on another human being, but this happens in other sports, not just boxing. Richard Vowles, a mate of mine, started boxing at the age of 13, as a featherweight. Like me, he won a schoolboys' Amateur Boxing Association title, he had a 100-odd amateur fights, turned pro and had four fights, and the worst he ever suffered from his years in the ring was a broken nose. Richard's in a wheelchair now, paralyzed from the neck down and it happened in a friendly game of rugby. He went in a scrum, all 9½ stone (133 pounds) of him, the scrum collapsed, and he broke his back. If he'd suffered the same kind of injury in a boxing ring, there would have been a clamor to ban the sport. It's an accident in rugby, yet in boxing it's different somehow. I know the argument about intent, but, listen, I'm a fighter and I can tell you what's in my mind. I have never set foot in a ring with the expressed intention of inflicting serious harm on my opponent. Never. That is just not me. Look at the tapes and see my face when I'm about to answer the bell. I'm usually smiling and it's not an assassin's smile. It's just the smile of a man about to do a job I enjoy. When I got in the ring against Bika, I looked down at my two sons, Joe and Connor, at ringside and I waved to them. Do you really think I turned away from my kids and immediately transformed myself into a monster who would want to kill a man? They know who their dad is and they know I'm not like that. I know I'm in a dangerous profession, but I also know I'm not a sadist. I'm a father of two boys I love to bits, with the same competitiveness and the same desire to do well as the best lock forward in international rugby. I've seen their flat noses, their cauliflower ears, and their gummy smiles. I've looked at myself in the mirror and all I can say is thank God I'm not a rugby player.

"When I got in the ring against Bika, I looked down at my two sons, Joe and Connor, at ringside and I waved to them. Do you really think I turned away from my kids and immediately transformed myself into a monster who would want to kill a man? They know who their dad is and they know I'm not like that. I know I'm in a dangerous profession, but I also know I'm not a sadist."

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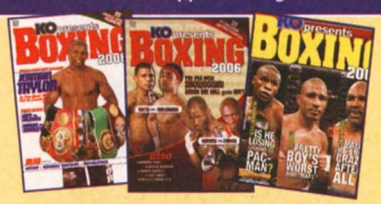

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I never had many friends growing up, but my best friend has always been my dad. He didn't drive a car for years, so most people in the Welsh valleys where I grew up and still live came to know him as "the running man" because he walked and jogged everywhere and he still would, despite having a car now, if it wasn't for his knees. Dad has always been fit, and if he had to go to Blackwood, three miles away from our home in Pentwynmawr, he would often have walked there and I was always with him. If I had a penny for every mile we've run and jogged and walked side-by-side over the years, I wouldn't still be boxing for a living. When I joined the boxing gym in Newbridge, we used to walk the mile-and-a-half there and we'd walk back. I probably walked and ran 10 miles most days, between going to the gym and getting out for the school bus, and this built up a good level of fitness and stamina. I didn't start driving until I was 21, taking after Dad.

People probably don't realize the way we are with one another, the fact that I infuriate him and he infuriates me but all the time we love each other to bits. Back early in my career, I went to Harley Street to have an operation on one of my knuckles. It had become inflamed and they had to tidy it up. During the surgery I was under anesthetic, but I left more or less straight away when the operation was done with my dad, who hadn't wanted to pay when he parked the car. We walked along a couple of streets and I was still half asleep, my hand heavily strapped and I just wanted to go home.

"Where are we parked, Dad? I just need to get in the car to put my head back."

"Don't worry, son, a minute's walk, that's all. We're just parked down the street."

Several streets later there was still no sign of the car.

"Dad, where are we parked?"

"Somewhere down here, Joe, all right?"

"Somewhere down here?"

Dad didn't have a clue where he had parked the car.

"I could have sworn I left it here, Joe ... Joe?"

I was already walking off in the opposite direction, looking for the nearest lamppost to kick or fall asleep against, and I muttered under my breath something about "scatty, brain," and "goat." He became all het up and we must have looked like Basil Fawlty and son, looking for the car. Finally, we found it, about an hour after leaving the surgery. I was sweaty, cranky, and my hand was throbbing, and I don't recall that it was the most pleasant journey back to Newbridge. But that's how we are all the time.

Dad got up to his usual antics at the weigh-in before my rematch with Mario Veit, which was held in a big car showroom where all the undercard fighters weighed in first before the main event fighters. I'd made up a one-liter bottle of my Diaoralyte drink, a mineral replacement fluid, and I was on the weight of 12 stone (168 pounds) but absolutely gagging for some liquids, in one of my don't-speak-to-me moods. Dad was holding the bottle and I was getting more anxious the longer this charade went on.

It took 45 minutes of hanging around before I weighed in along with Veit. The scales were up on a raised platform and all the WBO and German boxing officials stood on the stage. Finally, they called my name and up I went, followed by Dad and my uncle Sergio. But Dad, of course, tripped going up the steps and spilled the whole bloody drink over Paco Valcarcel, the president of the WBO, who was wearing a black tie and tuxedo. My dad's face turned beetroot red with embarrassment, but I was too dehydrated to be the same color with rage. He picked himself up and started rubbing Paco's jacket. "It's okay, Paco," he said. "There's a dry cleaners here somewhere." Then he saw my face, like I was about to kill him, so he ducked down to pick up the bottle. Totally stressed, he dropped it again and only managed to save the dregs. I jumped on the

PHOTO BY DAVE M. BENETT/GETTY IMAGES

Calzaghe is not one who seeks the spotlight outside of the boxing ring, but he did attend a dinner hosted by actor Sylvester Stallone in January 2007, where he posed with "Rocky." THE RING magazine championship belt over Joe's shoulder is the first ever awarded to a super middleweight.

scales, stepped off, and sucked the last drops of my precious drink. Dad was mortified and it was only later, after he'd got some water for me to drink and we'd returned to the hotel for a meal, that we saw the funny side of it and had a good laugh.

My dad has always been part of my career, the biggest part, and it will never happen that he's not there in my corner. I only reached the highest level because of him. He's my blood and, if I was ever in a crisis, Dad would be the first person to be at my side to bring me home safely. If I had been beaten up like Jeff Lacy the night we fought, I know that my dad would have pulled me out after eight or nine rounds. He's never told me that, but I know it's the truth. I wouldn't want to be pulled out and I'd bite the head of him for doing it, but he would do the right thing, I can count on that. ■

Extracted from *No Ordinary Joe* by Joe Calzaghe. Published by Century at £18.99. ©2007 Joe Calzaghe.

The RING

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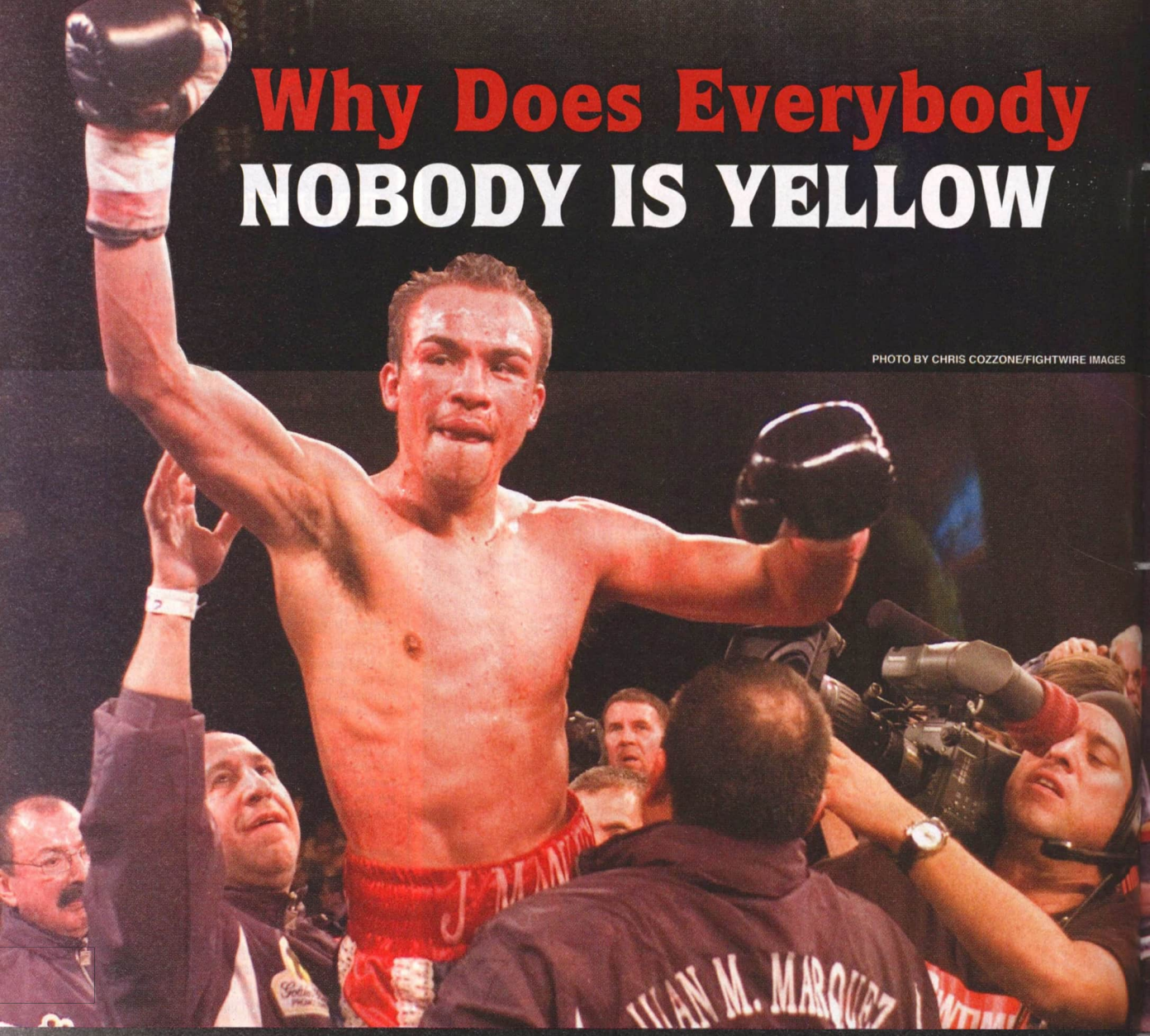

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

By William Dettloff

Under normal circumstances involving sane, rational humans, which we'll agree is a vanishing commodity, the notion of willingly engaging Manny Pacquiao in a fistfight for any reason other than self-preservation would seem foolhardy, if not downright masochistic. And that may be understating it. You couldn't reasonably blame any average-sized layman with a working set of eyes for busting into tears at the serious consideration of it. Indeed, Pacquiao is one of those little guys, like Bruce Lee, and Roberto Duran too (before he swallowed half of Managua) who could humble with a mere stare even the macho braggarts among us who ordinarily wouldn't fathom themselves getting whipped by a such a shrimp as he.

It is law among the uninitiated to believe that considerably greater girth is always preferable to greater skill; that a 130-pound fighter, no matter how

It seems like damned near everybody wants to fight he malevolent-looking Manny Pacquiao (opposite page), but it appears that Juan Manuel Marquez (above), who held "Pac-Man" to a scintillating draw in 2004, will get his long-awaited rematch with the Filipino cash cow.

Want To Fight Pacquiao?
WHEN GREEN IS INVOLVED!

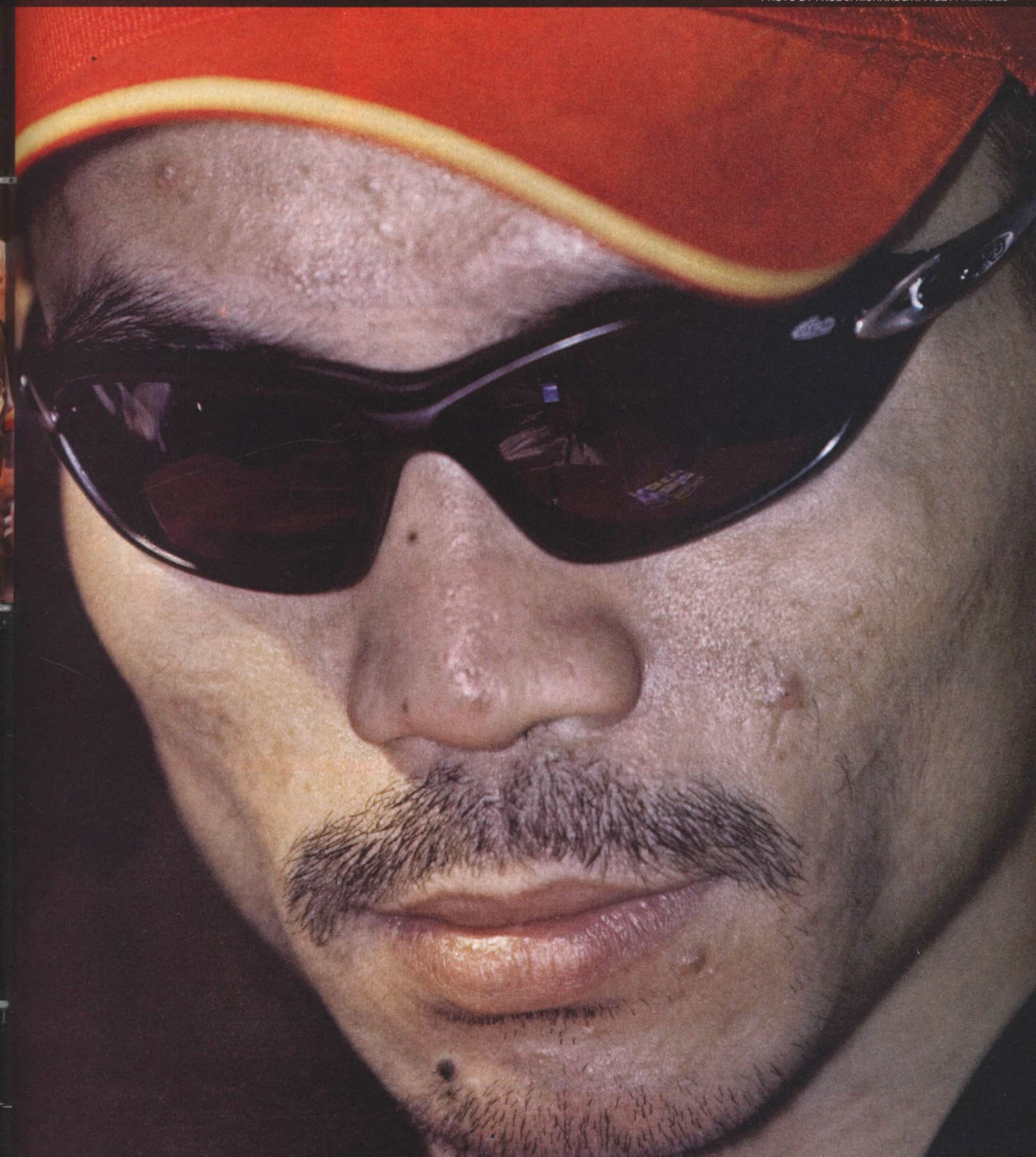

PHOTO BY PAUL J. RICHARDS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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The reason so many fighters are eager to tangle with Pacquiao is that he generates more money than any other fighter below the welterweight limit. Whenever Pac-Man fights, the stands are filled with Filipino fans, and when his opponent is Mexican, a box-office bonanza is virtually assured.

adept, would stand no chance in a scrap against any athletic man of 200 pounds or better. But Pacquiao could walk into a bar full of NFL lineman and command respect. You look at him and you know. Fortunately for us, the smaller reaches of the boxing business are not gin mills and the fighters who populate them not linemen. In as clear a demonstration as you could want that money is as useful as beautiful women are at making men do silly and self-destructive things, fighters from 130 to 150 pounds are all but begging for the chance to face Pacquiao in the ring.

We understood it, more or less, when the great Mexican Marco Antonio Barrera, clearly at the end of a long and accomplished career, chose to go out against Pacquiao even though Pacquiao already had given him a beating so severe we thought we might have been watching it through the lens of a Mississippi cop's dashboard cam. The only thing missing was the taser. But Barrera always was a strange one, drawn to the vulgarities of the ring not by the demons of poverty or loneliness, or by his naturally bestowed genius for it, but for the sheer joy it gave him to swap punches and grunts with other men of lesser means and to prove himself their superior. Someone else might say he spent a whole career and his youth slumming it, and it wouldn't be far from the truth.

Unlike the dozen or so fighters who now are vying for spots on Pacquiao's itinerary, Barrera didn't need the money. He took the rematch with Pacquiao perhaps because he *wanted* the money, but wanting money never should serve as a substitute for needing it when it comes to facing a wolverine like Pacquiao. It's too dangerous. The combination of that desire for the money and also the desire to erase some of the memories spawned in the first fight led him to take the second, though he knew as well as we all did that he wouldn't win. You'd be surprised how many fighters know it going in.

Marquez Too Good For Juarez

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Marquez shoots a left into Juarez' face

In boxing, one of the prime factors between an excellent, extended career and true greatness is the duration of peak performances. Since being disqualified in his hometown (Mexico City) pro debut back in 1993, Juan Manuel Marquez has beaten a pile of solid opponents and one great fighter. Where hard-luck Rocky Juarez ends up rated remains to be seen, but he showed some quality traits when he tangled with Marquez on November 3 at The Desert Diamond Casino, just outside of Tucson, Arizona, on the Tohono O'odham Nation.

Golden Boy Promotions relocated the Showtime clash from Las Vegas, much to the delight of Desert Diamond fans who got to see a major card at bargain rates in an intimate setting, where the back row would be considered ringside in more massive halls. Seating capacity was stretched to the max, but they could still only shoehorn 2,400 enthusiasts into the venue. Loco was the operative word.

Juarez, rebuilding from his twin losses to Marco Antonio Barrera, previously appeared here in February '07, knocking out Emmanuel Lucero in the fifth round. But Marquez was the overwhelming crowd favorite, and his impressive win over Barrera suggested the result against Juarez even before the opening bell.

Still, a fluke had major effect on the outcome when they collided *cabezas* in the opening frame,

PHOTO BY J.C. DIAZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Marquez drills Jimrex Jaca with a left to the chin en route to a ninth-round knockout in November 2006. The Mexican has been fighting in a slightly more aggressive style of late, which could have a significant impact in his rematch with Pacquiao.

and Juarez emerged with a wide cut along his left eye. Referee Bobby Ferrera, who did a good job of letting the fighters engage, ruled that an accidental butt opened the gash, which bled for the rest of the encounter. There may be questions about how much the Hand of Fate played, but no doubt about the hands of Marquez. He out-jabbed Juarez in a manner that no cut could affect.

Juarez, 129, Houston, Texas, came in with his guard high and attempted gut-shot pressure, but Marquez, 128, Mexico City, fired short mortars from underneath that froze his foe and built a non-stop lead on the scorecards. Both men piled on punches for the duration and there were some stirring exchanges, but Marquez almost always got the best of them.

Juarez didn't give up much ground in the second and third frames, but what ground he lost was significant. By the midway point, Juarez' entire face was bruised from Marquez' steady flow of body-head combinations.

Juarez got on his toes more after the sixth session, and walloped Marquez with a right in the eighth that would have creamed many contenders. Juarez piled on the punches and, briefly, it looked like he might turn things in his favor. Marquez later admitted that he was stunned, but he shook it off and absorbed more than a few other thudding shots without undue distress.

Marquez began to sit down set on his punches as they entered the stretch, and whipped in uppercuts that shook Juarez. Rocky stumbled in the 10th, but he never stopped rumbling.

Both men had plenty of facial welts at the conclusion. Juarez hung tough. Marquez got all the points. Robin Dolpierre saw it 118-110, Burt Clements, 117-111, Chris Wilson, 120-108. THE RING agreed with Wilson.

It may have been all Marquez, 48-3-1 (35), on the scorecards, but it was never easy. Juarez, 27-4 (19), should be applauded for refusing the safety of a technical draw, including another probable payday, had his corner pulled him out after a round or two.

"The cut affected my vision and threw my game plan off, but I wanted to win the right way," said a tenderized Juarez, chin still justifiably high. "I trained too hard to have the ref call it off. I'm surprised the scorecards were as wide as they were, but I'll have to watch the tape. When I'm old, people will say I fought with the best. I'll win a title sooner or later."

"I'm happy because everybody knows Juarez fights like a champion," said Marquez, "The plan was to fight smart, because he's dangerous. Every fight is different and I adjust. Now I think people know I should be fighting Manny Pacquiao again and that is who I want. He says he's the Mexican killer, but he hasn't proved it to me."

—Phil Woolever

At any rate, all the talk since has been around the identity of Pacquiao's next opponent and the one after that, and the one after that, and the one after that. Long gone are the days for Pacquiao when he could take a fight at a time and worry only about the one for which he is training at the moment. He and trainer Freddie Roach can say with good intention that they take one fight at a time, that they know the dangers of looking ahead. Clichés are an optimist's best friend. But it is an impossible proposition. We always look ahead. They do too, especially now. Pacquiao isn't done with one opponent before we're searching the ranks for who will be next. Uncommonly good fighters suffer this cruel injustice; one of the drawbacks of greatness, a byproduct of high expectations: Never mind this trick—what will you do for us next?

It is for this reason that the story here doesn't begin and end with the

Guzman's Style Stymies Soto

It wasn't that long ago that all the talk at welterweight was about how a fight might look between Floyd Mayweather and Antonio Margarito. We didn't find out then and probably never will, but we got what might have been a fair representation during Joan Guzman's unanimous decision win over Humberto Soto in front of a sold-out crowd of 2,000 at The Borgata Hotel Casino and Spa in Atlantic City.

From the start, it was evident that Guzman has been playing close attention in the gym to new lead trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr., who replaced Don House. We didn't see Guzman flipping $100 bills at a cameraman or anything, but we might as well have; the similarities between he and "Pretty Boy Floyd" were fairly startling. And Soto is nothing if not a miniature Margarito: a busy, rock-throwing, technically underrated bodypuncher who hadn't lost a fight in five years.

Guzman, 28-0 (17), started quickly, immediately demonstrating his considerable edge in speed

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/PORTHWIRE IMAGES

Guzman was too quick and too slick for Soto

news that Pacquiao's next opponent will most likely be Juan Manuel Marquez. It's more than that, because Pacquiao has obtained superstar status in this business. Until he loses again (the last time was in March 2005 against Erik Morales in the first of their three brutal meetings), and probably beyond that for a while, he will generate bucketsful of money. And after all, that's mostly what the fighting is all about, isn't it? So even after Marquez, there will be many choices.

Marquez, either by choice or by age, has grown a little feistier and a bit more stationary in the two years that have passed since he rose from three first-round knockdowns to more or less outbox Pacquiao over the distance, thereby earning the draw. Even if a subtle change in Marquez' style is due to his age—he's 34, which history tells us is a bit gray for the little guys—it hasn't reduced his effectiveness. With his embarrassing loss to Chris John behind him and wins over Barrera in March and hard-slugging if limited Rocky Juarez eight months later *(see sidebar, page 94)*, Marquez provided evidence that he might give Pacquiao a harder time this time than last. And clearly he wants the opportunity to try.

"I worked hard for four months and now I want to fight Manny Pacquiao," Marquez said after the Juarez fight. Oscar De La Hoya, Marquez' promoter, agreed, naturally. "If Pacquiao wants to be the world champion at 130 pounds, he needs to fight Marquez," De La Hoya said.

Marquez is one of those fighters, like Pacquiao and so many others, and unlike Barrera, who came from such desperate poverty and squalor that for the promise of the riches a fight with Pacquiao would bring, he would face a typhoon. It recalls Ruben Olivares, one of the great bantamweights, who was asked just after winning the WBA featherweight title in 1974 who he wanted to face next. "I'll fight (then-heavyweight champion) George Foreman if the money is right," he replied. Marquez is of similar mind.

But then, so are the rest of the junior lightweights vying to get into the Pacquiao sweepstakes. And their ambitions are two-fold: first to get a fight with Pacquiao, and should that fail because Pacquiao decides to abandon 130 altogether for 135, to get to the top of the division. With Barrera out of the

by thwarting Soto's aggression with upper-body movement and superb counterpunching. Both fighters missed a lot over the first two rounds, but the most effective punches by far were Guzman's blazing counter rights over the left jabs of Soto. Each one elicited a celebration by the small but raucous contingent of Guzman fans that chanted "Guzman! Guzman!" and waved tiny Dominican Republic flags at even the smallest Guzman successes.

There was less to cheer in the third when first a headbutt and then a low blow rattled Soto, 130, Los Mochis, Mexico. He was allotted the customary time to recover from the low blow and took a good portion of it before stomping after Guzman again. Despite his enthusiasm, Soto, 43-6-2 (27), simply couldn't catch up to Guzman, 129½, Santa Domingo, Dominic Republic, who took great delight in making him miss four or five punches in a row before planting a counter on his jaw. It wasn't until the fourth that Soto finally got some business done, getting inside and working over Guzman's body. It was his best round of the fight to that point and gave him and his fans hope for the rest. It was short-lived. Soto had his moments throughout the night, but just wasn't fast enough to give Guzman real concern at any point.

Guzman decelerated over the latter half of the fight and seemed content enough to win each round while occasionally making Soto look foolish. Soto periodically raked him with bodypunches on the ropes, but Guzman is every bit as elusive as Mayweather is in that posture, his left hand low and his right up by his cheek, left shoulder protecting his jaw. There were occasions when Guzman's defensiveness caused him to literally turn his back and skip across the ring, which created a negative impression in the eyes of some. But when the two stood and traded punches, it was Guzman who scored better every time.

"Guzman looked flawless tonight," Mayweather Sr. said after his fighter was awarded a unanimous decision by scores of 118-110 and 117-111 (twice). THE RING favored Guzman, 117-112. "He made a very good fighter look like he doesn't know how to fight. This is only the beginning. Guzman has bigger fights waiting for him."

—W.D.

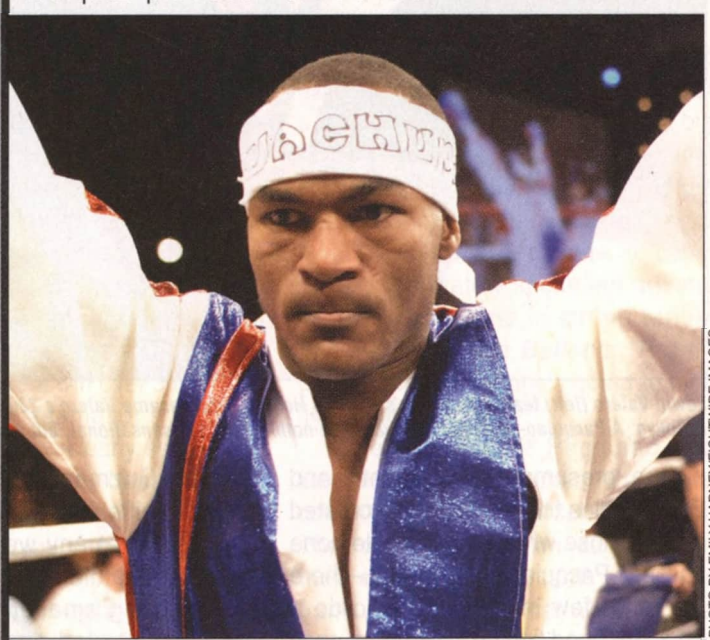

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Undefeated Joan Guzman is another talented 130-pounder who would like nothing better than a shot at Pacquiao. Moreover, if Pac-Man moves up to the lightweight division, Guzman would be in a great position to take over the junior lightweight division.

PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Edwin Valero (left) tears into Japan's Nobhito Honmo, who became Valero's 22nd consecutive knockout victim in the ninth round of their May 2007 bout in Tokyo. A Pacquiao-Valero match would be nothing short of sensational, but would have to be held outside of the United States.

picture, presumably permanently, and Erik Morales too, a vacuum is created among those who remain. While none possess Pacquiao's star power—there are but a few in the sport who do—there are good fighters there who, even without a superfight against Pacquiao, could make a decent living as the top dog at 130 pounds.

Joan Guzman possesses all the physical gifts one would want to see in a fighter at any weight. His hand speed and athleticism are unnatural even among smaller guys. And as he demonstrated against tough-as-nails Humberto Soto in November *(see sidebar, page 96)*, he can handle pressure as well as any fighter out there. "I was too fast for him," he said after beating Soto. "I want Pacquiao next."

Bob Arum's comments afterward that over the latter half of the fight Guzman took himself out of the Pacquiao sweepstakes by clowning and running are questionable; how much of Arum's critique was inspired by how good Guzman looked against a

very skilled, tough, upper-level guy in Soto? Not many junior lightweights in the world could have done the job against Soto that he did that night. Alas, it is the promoter's job (it used to be the manager's) to exercise caution even when his fighter will not. Guzman may never get a fight with Pacquiao—and it is understood, he is not in the same hemisphere in terms of drawing power—but he could still fill the void at 130 pounds if Pacquiao moves up.

The wildcard at 130 is Edwin Valero, the power-punching phenomenon whose failed brain scan some years ago has disqualified us in the United States from watching him on anything but youtube. That doesn't mean, of course, in this age of increased international boxing discourse, that Valero cannot reign as the junior lightweight king and never venture near the United States. If he and Pacquiao never fight—and it looks highly unlikely that they will—we all lose. What a shootout it would be! Even with his apparently recent willingness to box more and punch less that Pacquiao showed in the rematch with Barrera, a match between Pacquiao, 45-3-2 (35), and Valero, 22-0 (22), would be a fan's dream, a meeting between two of the world's purest punchers. That it would have to take place in the Philippines or some other Asian country wouldn't necessarily dampen our enthusiasm, though it might crash the youtube servers.

Of course, these conversations become moot should Pacquiao eventually decide to rise to lightweight and stay there. And at 135 he will find no shortage either of fighters willing to risk their teeth and long-term cognitive function in exchange for the prizes such an event would bring. The problem is that the world champion, Joel Casamayor, looked so depleted and abysmal getting a gift decision over Jose Armando Santa Cruz in November that a fight with Pacquiao would be unmarketable. Not even Pacquiao's rock star status in the Philippines—where they'd show up in the thousands to watch him box a head of lettuce—would help sell such a mismatch.

The biggest fight at lightweight would be against Juan Diaz, 33-0 (17), whose recent win over Julio Diaz, coupled with Casamayor's disaster against Santa Cruz, clearly established him as the division's best. Indeed, many see Diaz as the uncrowned champion and you can see the logic in it except for the inconvenient fact that Casamayor, ugly as he is of late, won the legitimate world title by beating the late Diego Corrales. You can't will someone else the world champion because of aesthetics, or even bad decisions. At any rate, a pairing of Pacquiao and Diaz would create not only a wonderful display of fistic fireworks, but enough pressure on Casamayor that he might simply abdicate and retire. Absent that, he'd have to fight the winner lest he face worldwide ridicule. Either way, we win.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

There has even been talk of a match between Pacquiao and Oscar De La Hoya, but Manny's trainer, Freddie Roach, quickly dismissed the bout as a ridiculous proposition due to the hefty weight disparity.

But before facing either Pacquiao or Casamayor, Diaz has to get past Australian slugger Michael Katsidis in a match that could easily produce Fight-of-the-Year type action. The attractive bout is penciled in for the last weekend of January, probably in Diaz' hometown of Houston, Texas.

If all that isn't enough, there is even talk of a Pacquiao-De La Hoya fight, as silly as it seems, given that this periodical rates De La Hoya among the junior middleweights. Hatched during a conversation between HBO's Larry Merchant and espn.com's Dan Rafael, the prospect of De La Hoya-Pacquiao has Arum and Richard Schaefer almost giddy with anticipation of the money it would generate. De La Hoya is said to favor it as well, and why not? He'd be a big favorite. That it would be a huge event is a given, but one wonders why in the world Pacquiao would want to pursue such a match. Roach, the voice of calm, immediately spoke out against it in the press and in strong terms, telling the *Manila Bulletin*, "It ain't gonna happen. Manny's going to look like a balloon ball."

Whether nor not Pacquiao and De La Hoya get together, "Pac-Man" doesn't have to look far for opponents. They are all around him, eager to test their skills, their craniums, and their bank accounts against what he, the game, and their own fates have to offer. In any other context we'd say they were crazy. But this is the fight game and this is what they do. Thank goodness. ■

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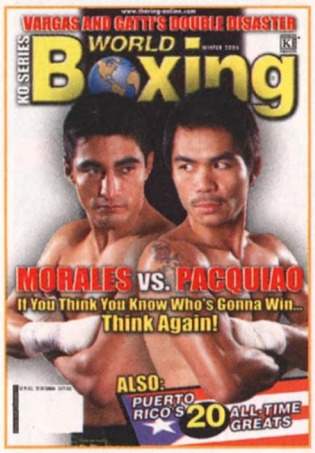

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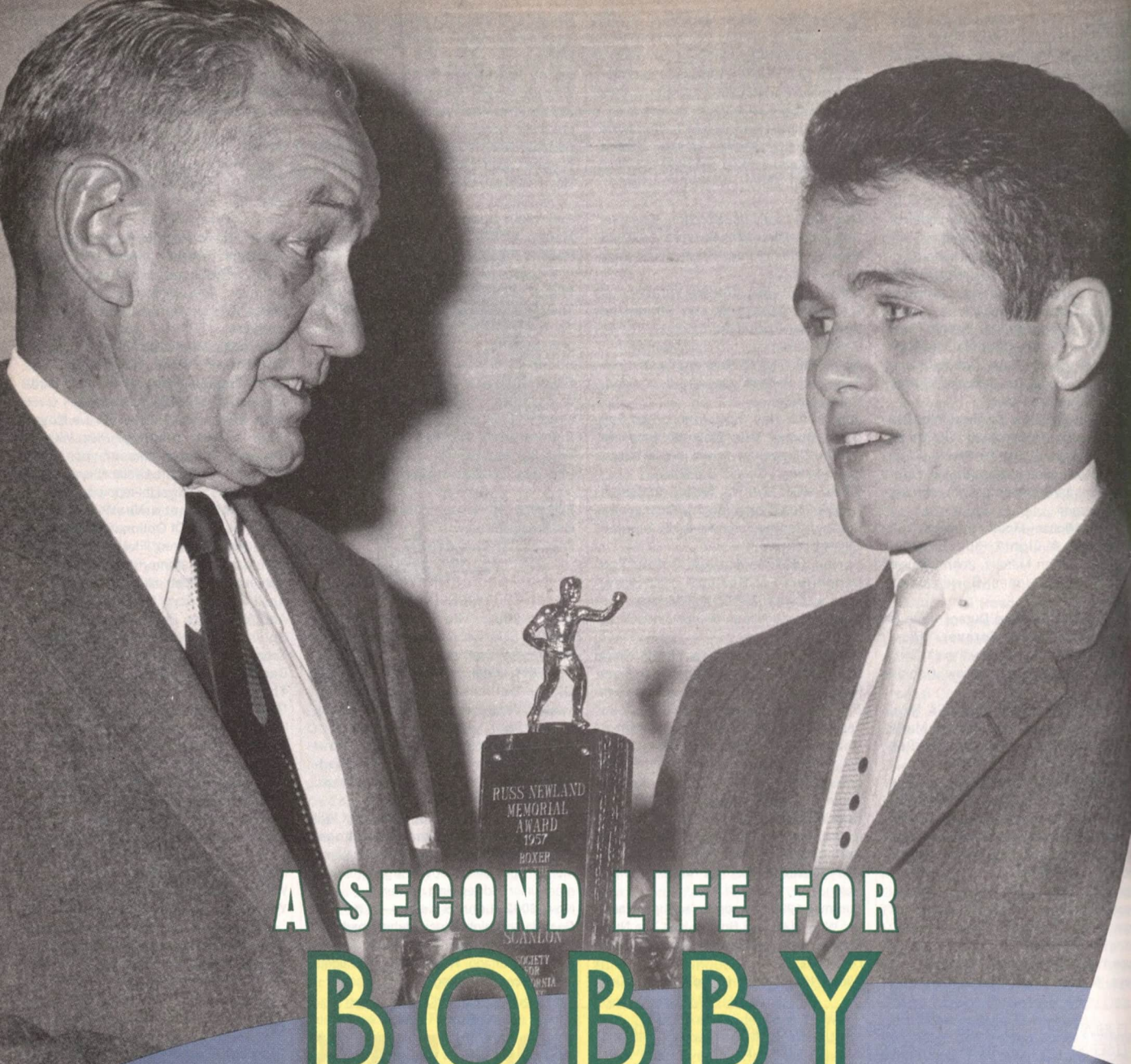


A SECOND LIFE FOR BOBBY SCANLON

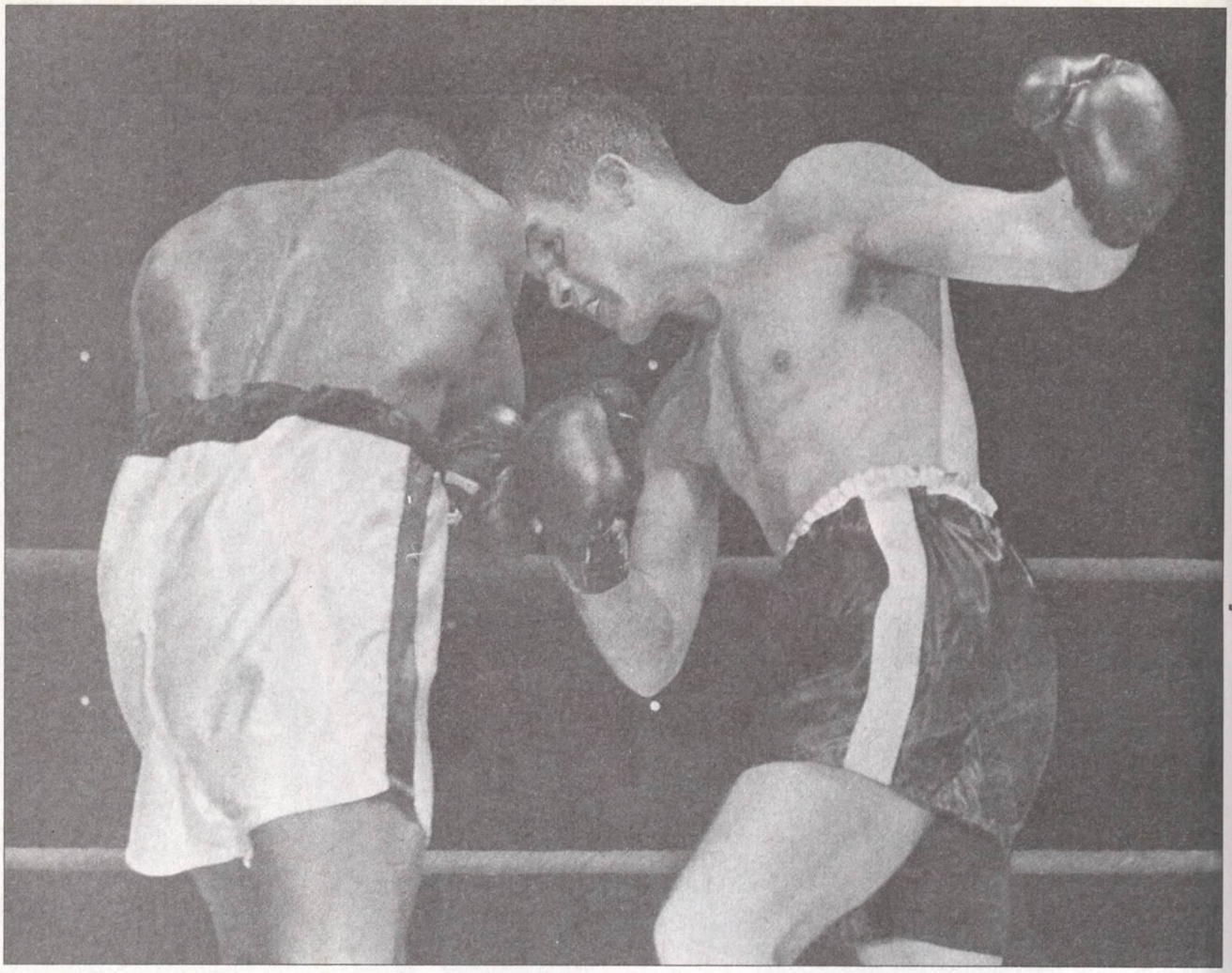
LITTLE BROTHER WON'T LET THE WORLD FORGET

Former lightweight champion Willie Ritchie presents Scanlon with the 1957 Northern California Boxer of the Year Award (left). Decades later, Scanlon's half-brother, Ron Ashburn, who has dedicated himself to keeping Scanlon's memory alive, accepted Scanlon's plaque from the Buffalo Veteran Boxers Association Hall of Fame (above).

By Pete Ehrmann

Bobby Scanlon was Ron Ashburn's half-brother, but there is nothing halfway or half-hearted about Ashburn's determination to get, as he puts it, "one more raise of the hand" for the 1950s lightweight contender whose 39 years were etched with sadness and tragedy.

A toy painter for Fisher-Price in upstate New York, the 47-year-old Ashburn was born 24 years after Scanlon, who was the oldest of the nine children borne by their mother. Ashburn is the youngest.



The baby-faced Scanlon winds up with a left hook en route to a 10-round unanimous decision over Bobby Rogers at Chicago Stadium in May 1958. At the time, Scanlon was one of the hottest young fighters in the country.

Ashburn was about six when he first got to know the brother who had been a boxing legend in their hometown of Buffalo, New York. By then, Scanlon's ring career was over, and, Ashburn says, "He was having difficulty with his health, with headaches and depression."

Worst of all, "he felt like he was not important anymore."

But to the adolescent brother with whom Scanlon took long walks, the ex-contender was a superstar.

"We didn't have much when I was young," said Ashburn, "so you can imagine how much Bobby's legend as a world-class fighter gave us something to brag about."

Almost 38 years after Scanlon's death, Ashburn still thinks and brags about him every day. And Ashburn is on a mission to learn everything he can about his brother, collecting articles, talking to people who knew him, and enthusiastically "celebrating the good things Bobby went through."

So he wears clothes with "Bobby Scanlon" emblazoned on them when he travels around Buffalo, and when he volunteers at the local Veteran's Hospital, always proudly "representing Bobby's memory and career" and doing everything he can to give the brother who died so young a second life.

Bobby Scanlon learned to fight in the orphanage he grew up in after his father took off and his mother wanted her children better provided for than she could manage herself. Short and slight, with the cherubic features of a natural-born victim, Scanlon "fought for his life at 10 years of age," according to his brother, and "he whipped everyone, big and small."

At 15, Scanlon ran away and got work as a messenger for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, and started going to a Buffalo gym. He won 15 of 16 amateur fights, reversed the loss, and won a New York Golden Gloves bantamweight title.

Though he considered himself more of "a lover than a fighter," the handsome Scanlon turned pro of May 31, 1954, beating Gene Donaldson in four rounds at St. Nick's Arena in New York City.

(Scanlon's favorite fighter was Willie Pep, the ex-featherweight champion. In the lobby of the hotel as he prepared to leave for St. Nick's, Scanlon was thrilled to run into his idol. "Pep told him to stay away from drinking and women," relates Ashburn. "Then a friend of Pep's came into the lobby with two beautiful, tall women and said to Pep, 'Let's go.' Pep turned to Bobby and said, 'I'm not the champ anymore. I can do this.'")

After four wins, Scanlon fought a

draw against Frankie Madison, and then beat 17 straight opponents (including Madison in a return) over the course of the next two years.

In 1957, Scanlon and his stablemates—future middleweight contenders Joey Giambra and Rocky Fummerelle, and lightweight Richie Todoro—relocated to San Francisco with their manager, Mike Scanlon (no relation to Bobby). After four more wins on the West Coast, Bobby closed out the year by beating former 135-pound world champs Wallace "Bud" Smith (TKO 10) and Lauro Salas (W 10).

Equally thrilling to Scanlon were the assessments of two other former champions. Ex-welterweight king Jimmy McLarnin called him the best Irish fighter since Billy Conn, and predicted that Scanlon would win the lightweight crown.

Seconding that was Willie Ritchie, the early 20th-century lightweight champion. "I've watched Scanlon from the time he moved our here," said Ritchie, who personally presented Bobby with the 1957 Northern California Fighter of the Year trophy. "His prospects are tremendous and the improvement he's shown convinces me that he might well win my old title in a year or so."

The wins and accolades continued piling up through late-1958. In nationally televised bouts, Scanlon won decisions over Bobby Rogers and Gale Kerwin.

"It beats the hell out of me how one guy can throw that many gloves," groaned the battered Kerwin after their fight at Madison Square Garden.

THE RING and *Boxing Illustrated* ran features about the new lightweight sensation. In a piece titled "Face Of An Angel, Heart Of A Killer," noted boxing writer Eddie Muller of the *San Francisco Chronicle* mentioned that Scanlon had become "the idol of the bobby-sox brigade" at City College, where he was a freshman.

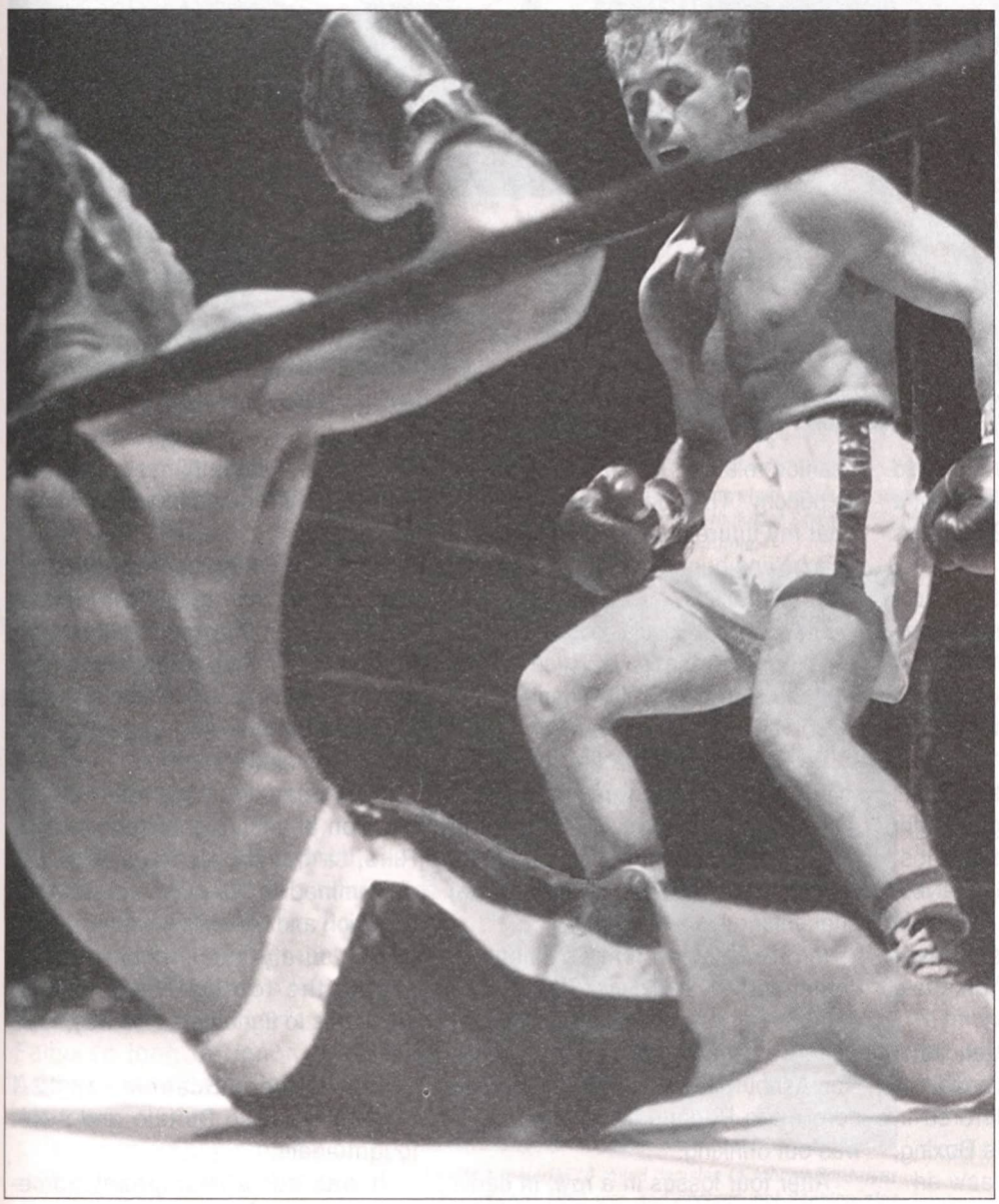
The 22-year-old boxer's equally attractive personality also won Scanlon friends in high places. He palled with singers Johnny Mathis and Jerry Vale, and at dinner with Kim Novak the bombshell actress may have agreed with Sugar Ray Robinson's pronouncement that Scanlon was "too pretty to be a fighter."

("I dislike being referred to as handsome," Bobby told THE RING's Fred Eisenstadt. "So becoming a fighter is gradually solving the problem, as a close look at my pan will disclose.")

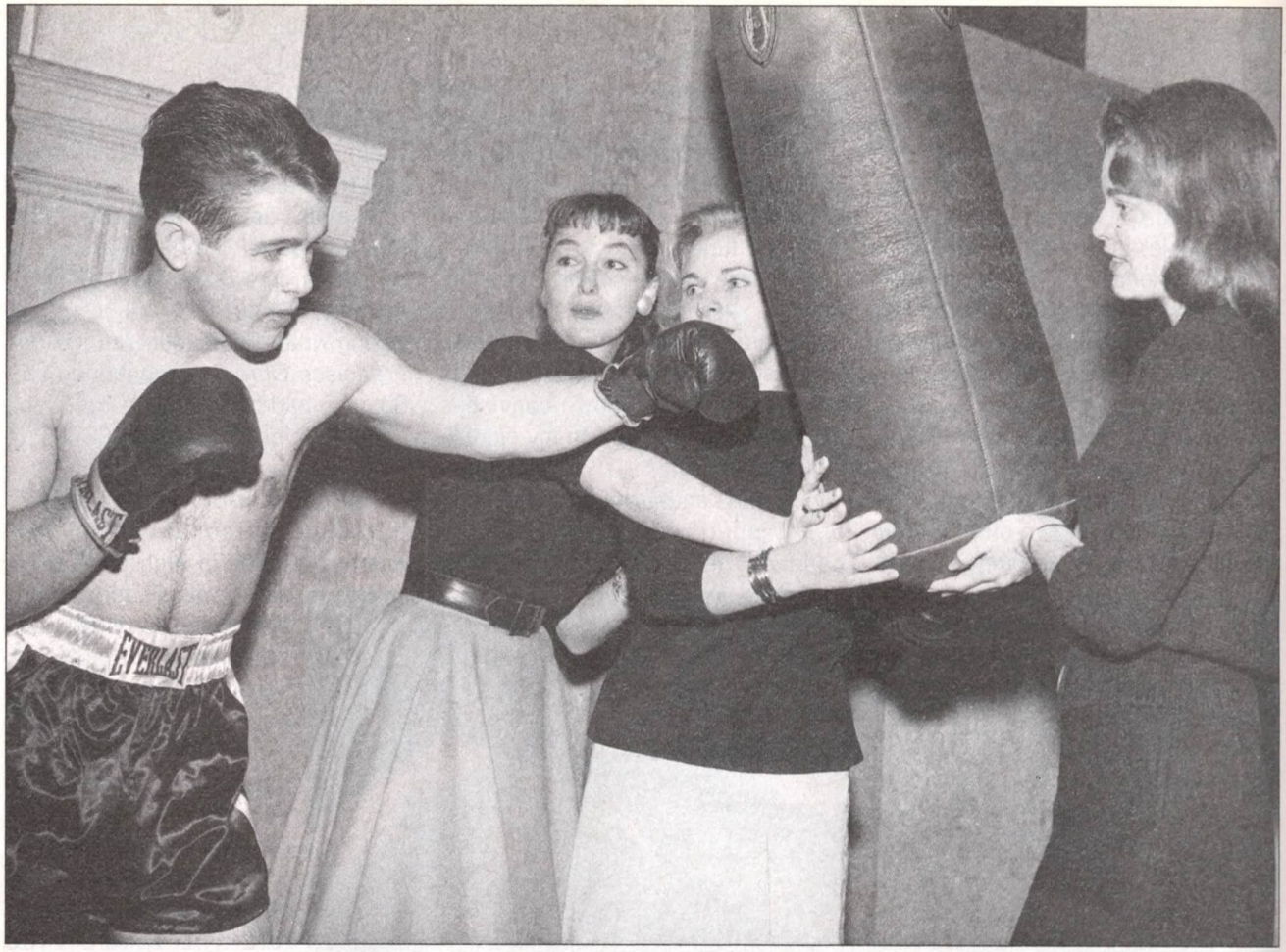
That pan and Scanlon's ring record got their first big blemish on October 15, 1958, when Bobby, then 30-0-1 and ranked third by THE RING, tangled with number-two Paolo Rosi.

In the third round ("one of the wildest rounds of San Francisco boxing history," reported United Press International), the Italian knocked Scanlon down, then Scanlon knocked Rosi down, and then Rosi knocked him down again for keeps.

Rosi copped a split-decision in a bloody rematch two months later. After rebounding with a win over contender Orlando Zuleuta



Scanlon has Gale Kerwin on the floor in the second round of their July 1958 bout at Madison Square Garden. Kerwin beat the count, but still lost a unanimous 10-round decision to the undefeated Buffalo fighter.



Although Scanlon didn't like to be referred to as "handsome," he didn't mind all the attention he received from the female students at San Francisco's City College, where the boxer enrolled as a freshman when he was 22 years old.

in early-1959, Scanlon was knocked down in the seventh round and lost a majority verdict to Johnny Gonsalves on April 9 of that year.

Thanks to that fight, Bobby's whole future, and not just as a boxer, became blurry. Literally. When he looked in the mirror the next morning, two Scanlons looked back, thanks to damage to a nerve in his right eye.

The double vision worsened as Scanlon defeated Italian lightweight champion Mario Vecchiatto and lost decisions to Al Urbina and Gonsalves. On May 5, 1960, he returned to Buffalo and won a 12-round decision over Jackie Donnelly for the New York State lightweight title.

Less than two weeks later, local newspaper readers saw the headline, "Life's Lost Chances Are Mirrored In Bobby's Eyes; Scanlon Quits Boxing, Faces Toughest Fight Ever."

"I asked one doctor point blank: 'What happens if I keep on fighting?'" Scanlon related. "He said, 'You'll wind up punchy.' That did it. I may not know what my future is, but I won't want to be a boxing bum. I'm only 24. I can do something else."

But he didn't. Regular jobs and normal hours were for other guys. Three months later, back in California, Scanlon beat Chico Santos in 10 rounds.

By '62, there were other problems to go with the double vision and increasing headaches. Scanlon and his wife of three years split up, and he was treated at a San Rafael hospital after slitting his wrists.

In '63, Scanlon lost decisions to contenders Luis Molina, Pauly Armstead, and, in a non-title bout, junior welterweight champion Eddie Perkins. Ron Ashburn has heard that the night before the Perkins fight, his brother was out drinking.

After four losses in a row, in early-'66, Scanlon returned to San Francisco to start over. "The Irish kid said he decided to behave himself," reported Eddie Muller. "He said he wasn't drinking anymore."

Top lightweight contender Luis Molina held two decision wins over Scanlon when they fought on May 24, 1966, but this time Bobby dominated him and won a technical decision after Molina butted open a bad cut on his face in the ninth round.

"The Scanlon of this fight was the Scanlon of yesteryear," reported THE RING, "a hungry gladiator who was determined to win and who had the condition and the ability to do just that."

He "surely must regain ranking among the top lightweights if he continues to fight the same way," said the story.

But instead, Scanlon, 42-12-1 (11), returned to Buffalo and never fought again.

It was not a triumphant homecoming.

"He entered another world in late-

1966," reported the Buffalo newspaper in a story after Bobby's death, "and the next nine years brought him one heartbreak after another."

According to the piece by Warner Hessler, "Bobby was a nice guy who wouldn't harm a fly, and he was not mentally stable for several years before his death.

"He led a lonely life," reported Hessler. "Neighbors heard him screaming quite frequently at night with nightmares ... He took frequent walks and always greeted people with the words, 'Say a prayer for me.'"

Says Ashburn: "Concussions kicked his ass. You can't fight for 13 years and not get damaged. The double vision really messed him up, and he had bad headaches when I knew him."

Scanlon ended up living across the street from the orphanage where he'd grown up, in a $75-a-month room at the Lackawanna Inn. Early on the morning of June 23, 1975, he fell asleep there with a lit cigarette in his hand. The resulting fire ended his life.

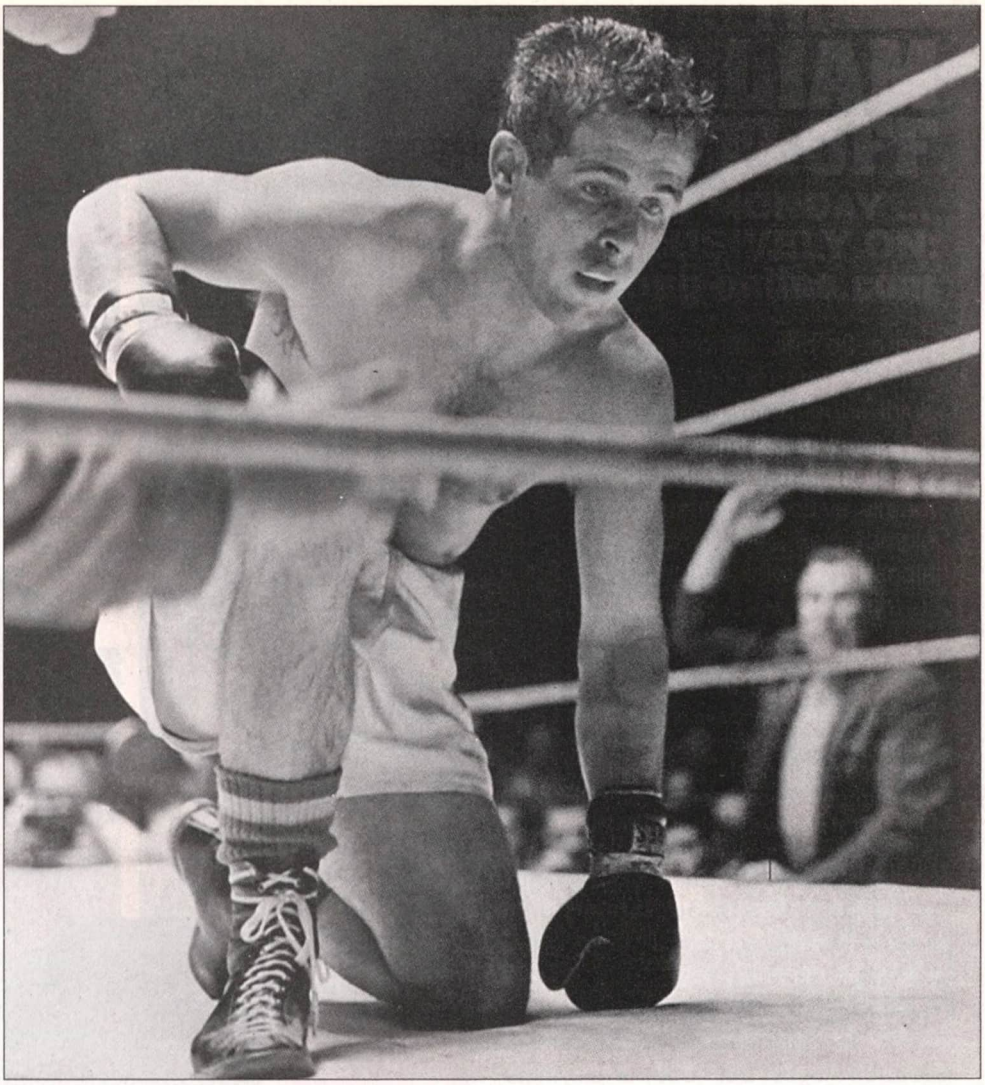
"He was a nice young man who got caught up in the frenzy of the fight game and came out second best," said the *South Buffalo-West Seneca News*.

Ashburn says nuts to that.

"He was special and a lot bigger than he thought," Ashburn said, "but he never bragged, and so I'm doing all the bragging."

Ashburn accepted his brother's plaque when Scanlon was inducted into the Buffalo Veteran Boxers Association Hall of Fame in 2003, and he wonders what's taking the Greater Buffalo Sports Hall of Fame so long to honor the man Ashburn says "was like a god in this town."

Wearing Bobby's name on his clothes is only part of what Ashburn does to keep his brother's memory fresh and positive.



Scanlon was THE RING's third-ranked lightweight when he suffered his first defeat. It came at the hands of second-ranked Paolo Rosi in a wild fight that saw Scanlon floor Rosi in the third before the Italian rallied back to twice deck and stop Scanlon the same round.

Losing a majority 10-round decision to Johnny Gonsalves (left) in April 1960 was bad enough, but Scanlon also suffered a serious eye injury. He continued to fight, but went 10-9 in his next 19 bouts, finally retiring May 1966.

"Some people stop me and say Bobby was a great fighter, and I always ask them if they would like some pictures of him and a fight film. They say, 'How much?' and I tell them I appreciate them remembering him and never ask for a penny.

"Kinkos is getting a lot of my money, but it brings me joy."

But nothing like what happened last October, when Ashburn went to Las Vegas and sat down with Joey Giambra, who told him stories about Bobby from their days as boxing stablemates.

"When we parted," Ashburn recalls, Giambra "said he felt like he was shaking Bobby's hand."

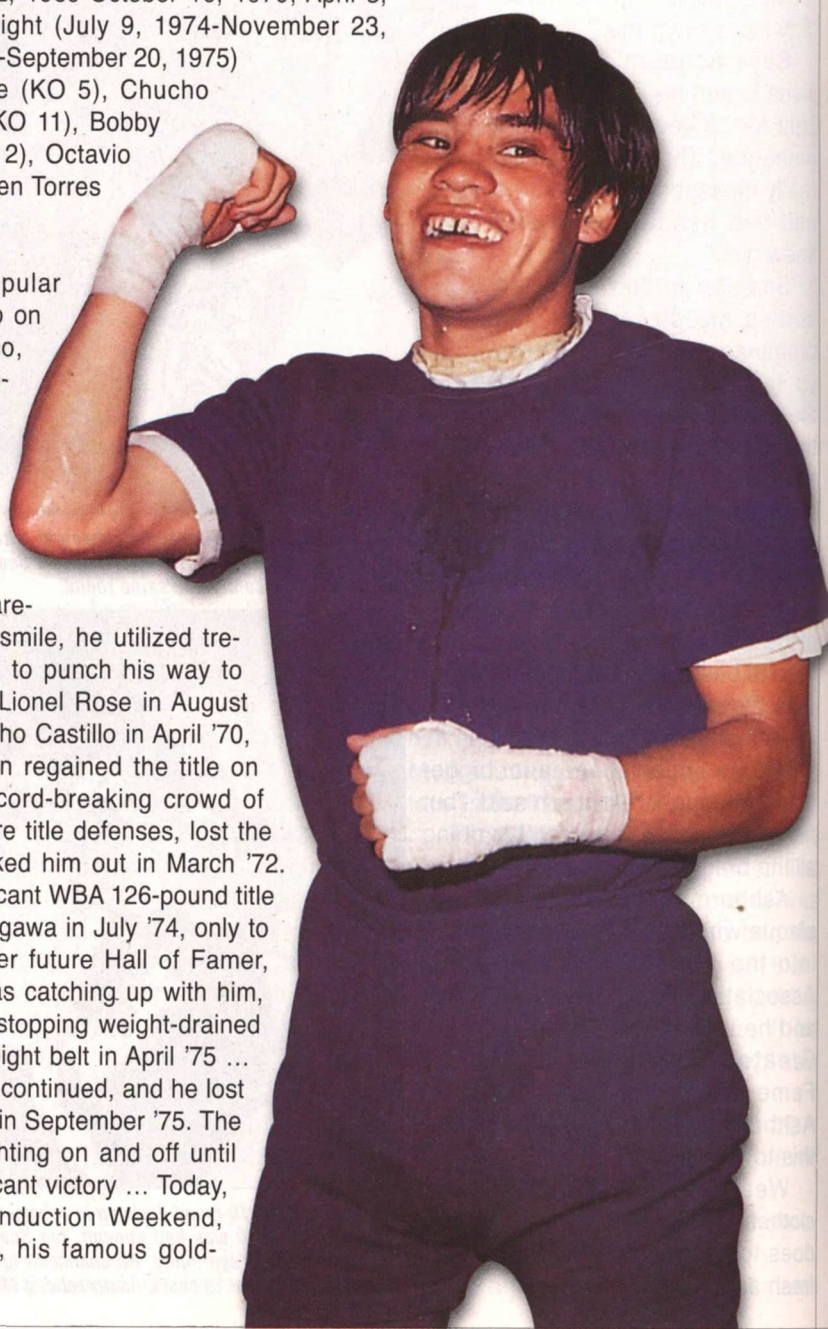
"That was the best thing anyone ever said to me." ■

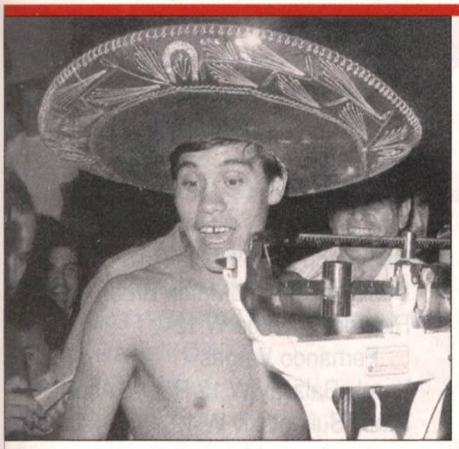
Hall of Fame Profile

A thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York.

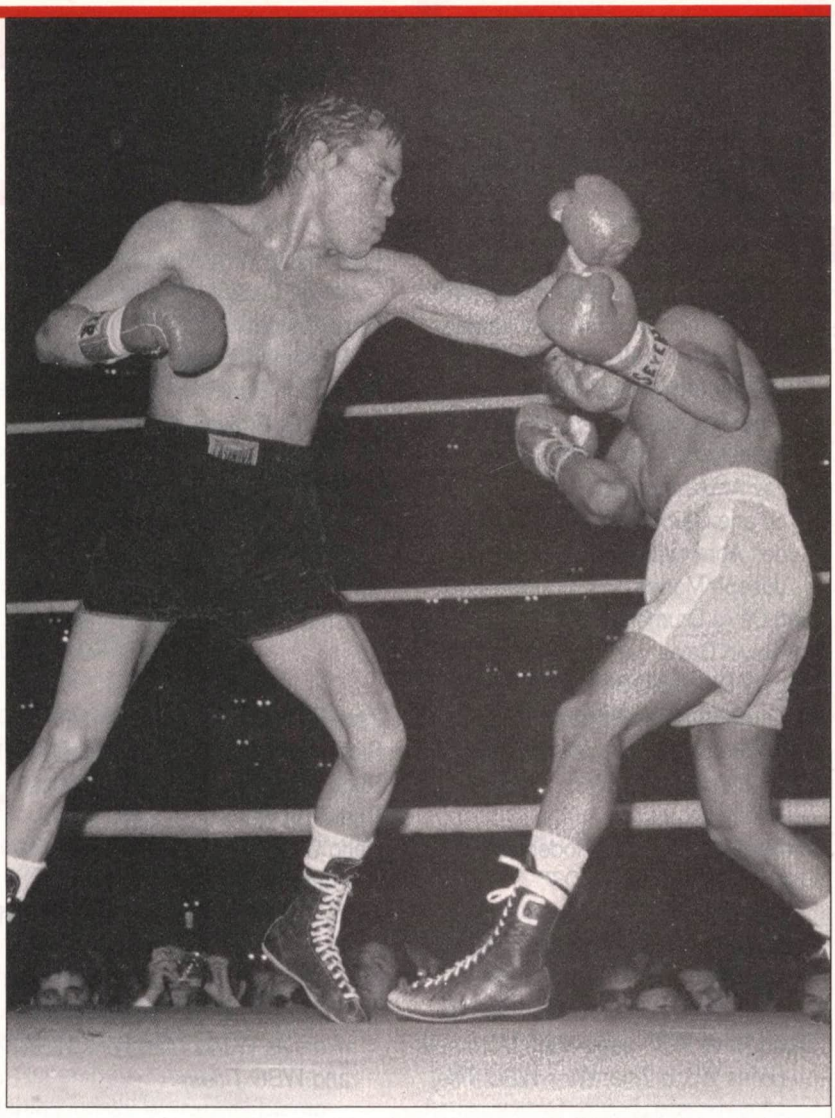
Ruben Olivares

Nickname: Rock-A-Bye Ruben, El Puas
Birthdate: January 14, 1947
Birthplace: Mexico City, Mexico
Weight Class: Bantamweight, Featherweight
Height: 5'5½"
Professional Record: 88-13-3 (77)
Titles: World Bantamweight (August 22, 1969-October 16, 1970; April 3, 1971-March 19, 1972), WBA Featherweight (July 9, 1974-November 23, 1974), WBC Featherweight (June 20, 1975-September 20, 1975)
Best Performances: Lionel Rose (KO 5), Chucho Castillo (W 15, W 15), Jesus Pimentel (KO 11), Bobby Chacon (KO 9, KO 2), Alan Rudkin (KO 2), Octavio Gomez (KO 5), Takao Sakurai (KO 6), Efren Torres (KO 4)
Year of IBHOF Induction: 1991
Background: One of the most popular Mexican fighters of all-time, he turned pro on January 4, 1965, in Cuernavaca, Mexico, with a first-round knockout. It was the beginning of an incredible kayo run in which he stopped his first 23 opponents and 54 of his first 57 opponents ... Made his U.S. debut on August 28, 1968, at the Inglewood Forum, where he was to go on to become one of the biggest drawing cards in the history of California boxing ... A carefree, party-hardy type with a charismatic smile, he utilized tremendous power, especially the left hook, to punch his way to bantamweight champion by knocking out Lionel Rose in August '69 ... Came off the floor to decision Chucho Castillo in April '70, lost a rematch via cut-eye TKO, and then regained the title on points to end the trilogy in front of a record-breaking crowd of 18,456 at the Forum ... Following two more title defenses, lost the bantam belt to Rafael Herrera, who knocked him out in March '72. Moved up to featherweight and won the vacant WBA 126-pound title with a seventh-round kayo of Zensuke Utagawa in July '74, only to lose it in his first defense, against another future Hall of Famer, Alexis Arguello ... By then, his lifestyle was catching up with him, but he still managed to claim a final title, stopping weight-drained Bobby Chacon to take the WBC featherweight belt in April '75 ... The old pattern of lax training and partying continued, and he lost the title to David Kotey in his first defense, in September '75. The lovable but flawed Mexican continued fighting on and off until March '88, but never tallied another significant victory ... Today, he is a frequent guest at the IBHOF's Induction Weekend, where he loves to mingle with the fans, his famous gold-capped smile still as prevalent as ever.

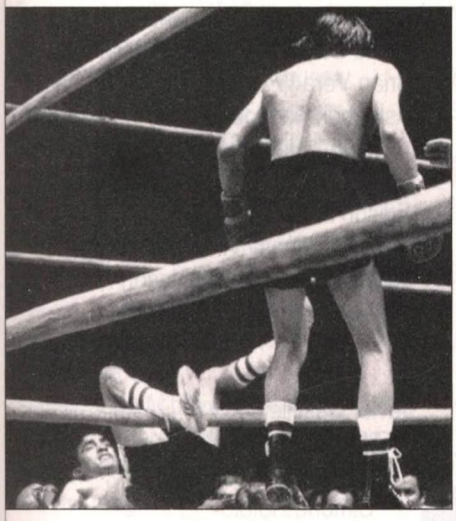




A sombrero-wearing Olivares makes weight for his bantamweight title fight with Lionel Rose. As the years and the parties went by, the scales became a major stumbling block for the happy-go-lucky Mexican, who probably would have had an even more successful career had he been more disciplined.



Olivares wings his famous left hook at Chucho Castillo in the third bout of their famous trilogy. "Rock-A-Bye Ruben" won the first and third matches against his arch-rival, but had to climb off the canvas both times to do so.



Jesus Pimentel is knocked through the ropes and onto the ring apron during the sixth round of his bantamweight championship fight with Olivares. Pimental scrambled back into the ring in time, but was eventually stopped in the 11th round of a slugfest.

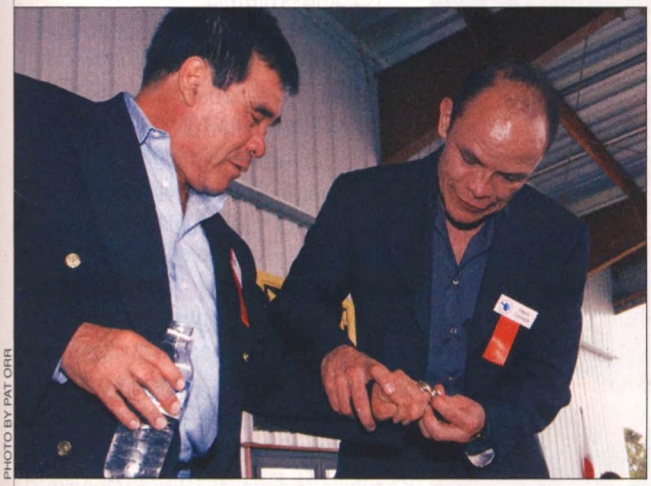
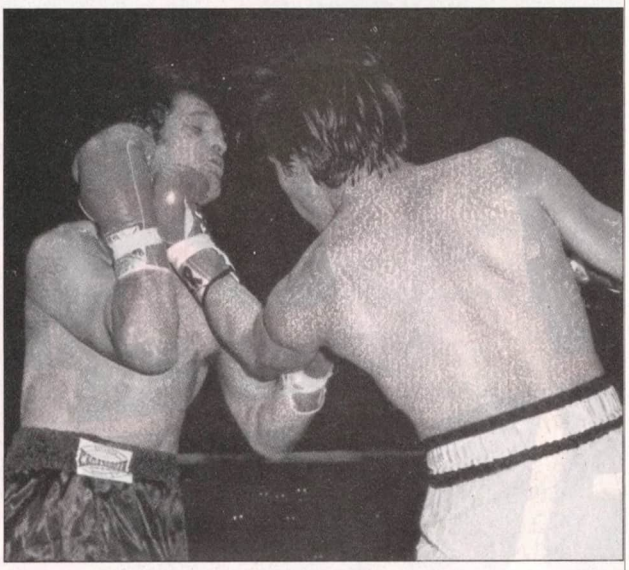


PHOTO BY PAT ORR

Olivares shows new Hall of Fame inductee Daniel Zaragoza his Hall of Fame ring at the 2004 ceremonies. Between them, the pair of Mexican greats had 170 professional bouts.



Very few fighters survived a flush left hook to the chin such as this one being fielded by Valentin Galeano, who was no exception. Olivares knocked him out in the ninth round of their 1971 non-title match in Los Angeles.

[Summary]

Heavyweights

Alexander Povetkin KO 11 Chris Byrd
Vladimir Virchis KO 5 Robert Hawkins
Eddie Chambers W 12 Calvin Brock
Alexander Dimitrenko KO 12 Timo Hoffmann
Hasim Rahman KO 10 Zuri Lawrence
Friday Ahunanya TKO 12 Shane Cameron
Rudolf Abramyan W 10 Joseph Marwa
Carl Davis Drumond W 10 Kelvin Davis
Grigory Drozd KO 8 Laudelino Jose Barros
John Poore W 8 Dan Whetzel
Israel Carlos Garcia W 6 Kenny Lemos
Michael Moorer W 10 Roderick Willis
Osborne Machimana KO 7 Pieter Cronie
Cesar Acevedo KO 1 Gonzalo Basile

Cruiserweights

David Haye KO 7 Jean-Marc Mormeck (*Wins World Title; Wins WBC Title*)
Firat Arslan W 12 Virgil Hill (*Wins Vacant WBA Title*)
Enzo Maccarinelli KO 4 Mohamed Azzaoui
Johnathon Banks W 10 Derrick Brown
Christophe Dettinger W 10 Kamel Amrane
Franco Sanchez W Disq. 2 Hugo Garay
Yoan Pablo Hernandez W 8 Ismail Abdoul

Light Heavyweights

Zsolt Erdei W 12 Tito Mendoza
Richard Hall KO 4 Byron Mitchell
Hugo Garay KO 2 Eduardo Franca
Daniel Bruwer KO 10 Soon Botes
Dario Cichello W 10 Francesco Versaci
Jonny Walker KO 9 Anont Donpradith

Super Middleweights

Joe Calzaghe W 12 Mikkel Kessler (*Retains World Title; Wins WBA and WBC Titles*)
Carl Froch KO 5 Robin Reid
Denis Inkin W 12 Martin Bruer
Ricardo Mayorga W 12 Fernando Vargas
Karoly Balzsay W 12 Ruben Acosta
Dmitri Sukhotskiy W 12 Konstantin Makhankov
David Lopez W 10 David Toribio
Piotr Wilczewski W 10 Bernard Donfack
Sakio Bika W 8 Sam Soliman
Sakio Bika KO 8 Jaidon Codrington
Sam Soliman W 6 Wayne Johnsen
David Banks W 6 Donny McCrary
Brian Vera W 6 Max Alexander
Aslanbek Kodzoev W 6 Miguel Hernandez
Francis Cheka W 10 Rashid Matumla
Edison Miranda KO 5 Henry Porras
Nathan Cleverly W 8 Joey Vegas
James McGirt Jr. W 8 Jason Naugler
Mehdi Amar W 8 Mike Algoet

Middleweights

Javier Castillejo KO 6 Mariano Carrera
Sebastian Sylvester W 12 Simone Rotolo
Ruben Diaz D 12 Kofi Jantuah
Carlos Baldomir W 10 Luciano Perez
Jamie Pittman W 12 Andreas Seran
Hassan Matumla W 10 Kalama Nyilawila
Naotaka Hozumi W 10 Fukutaro Ujiie
Miguel Espino KO 4 Roberto Valenzuela
George Klinesmith KO 3 Chris Overbey
Alex Bunema KO 2 Steve Walker
Andy Lee KO 1 Marcus Thomas

Junior Middleweights

Roman Karmazin KO 3 Alejandro Garcia
Nigel Snart W 10 Dion McNabney
Saul Roman W 10 Kassim Ouma
Vincent Vuma W 12 Raul Bejarano
Kazuhiko Hidaka W 12 Yuki Nonaka
Chad Broussard W 10 Homer Gibbins

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY / FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Bantamweight Abner Mares stings Damian Marchiano

Hidenori Tajima KO 7 Ryuichi Kuwana
Jose Varela KO 4 James Crayton
Christophe Canclaux KO 3
Steve Conway
Ricardo Cortes KO 2 Joshua Onyango

Welterweights

Miguel Cotto W 12 Shane Mosley
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Kermit Cintron KO 10
Jesse Feliciano
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Antonio Margarito KO 1
Golden Johnson
Zab Judah W 12 Ryan Davis
Lamont Peterson KO 2
Humberto Toledo
Jackson Bonsu KO 3 Nordine Mouchi
Bongani Mwelase W 12 Lucky Lewele
Carlos Vilches KO 4 Juan Sandoval
Victor Ortiz KO 1 Carlos Maussa
Mike Jones KO 3 Israel Cardona
James Moore KO 2 Thomas Davis
Jose Luis Castillo KO 6 Adan Casillas
Raul Balbi KO 2 Diego Ponce
Euri Gonzalez W 10 Raul Pinzon

Junior Welterweights

Demetrius Hopkins W 10
Enrique Colin
Souleymane M'baye KO 4 Ameth Diaz
Anthony Peterson KO 5 Oscar Leon
Giorgio Marinelli W 12 Peter Semo
Martin Coggi W 10
Hugo Orlando Fernandez
Rock Allen W 8 Braulio Lopez
Ali Chebah KO 3 Wellington De Jesus
Michael Lozada KO 3 Mario Mondragon

Lightweights

Joel Casamayor W 12 Jose Santa Cruz
(*Retains World Title*)
Sam Rukundo W 12 Robert Osiobe
Fernando Angulo W 10
Damian Fuller
Bobby Pacquiao KO 4
Fernando Trejo
Emiko Raika W 10 Ann Saccurato
Francisco Lorenzo W 10
Guadalupe Rosales
Yasuhiro Kawabata W 10
Tomoya Matsuda
Nelson Lara W 10 Rudis Cruz
Nugzar Margvelashvili KO 4
Barry Hughes
John Murray KO 4 Dean Hickman
Rene Mahling KO 4
Mkwanda Matumla
Rene Gonzalez KO 4 Luis Cid

Junior Lightweights

Juan Manuel Marquez W 12
Rocky Juarez
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Joan Guzman W 12 Humberto Soto
Cassius Baloyi W 12 Gary St. Clair
Jesus Escalona W 12
Ermano Fegatelli
Jason Litzau W 10 Edel Ruiz
Miguel Angel Munguia W 10
Jose Diaz
Bihes Barakat W 10 Charles Damas
Roy Mukhlis KO 7
Decho Bankluaygym
Yuriorkis Gamboa KO 6
Adailton De Jesus
Zolani Marali KO 3 Dario Lombardo
Billy Dib W 8 Rogers Mtagwa

Featherweights

Robert Guerrero KO 1 Martin Honorio
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Ernesto Morales W 12
Lizardo Moreno
Jhonny Gonzalez W 10
Jose Angel Beranza
Yoshinori Miyata W 10
Ruben Estanislao
Martin Lindsay W 10 Uriel Barrera
Futa Nakagishi W 10
Kumarnthong Por Pluemkamol
Takahiro Aoh W 10 Noriyuki Ueno
Orlando Cruz W 10 Wilfredo Acuna
Manuel Perez W 10 Victory Barela
Andrey Isaev TKO 9
Saohin Srithai Condo
Thomas Mashaba KO 9 Eric Aiken
Julio Zarate KO 4 Vernie Torres
Gary Stark Jr. W 8 Robert DaLuz
Joel Consulta W 8
Boonmee Vidhaykhon
Ji-Hoon Kim KO 3 Eduardo Apa-ap
Felipe Orocuta KO 3 Adolfo Arrellano
Robinson Castellanos KO 2
Jorge Aguirre

Junior Featherweights

Steve Molitor W 12 Fahsan 3K Battery
(*Retains IBF Title*)
Olivier Lontchi W 12 Cruz Carbajal
Mike Oliver W 12 Al Seeger
Kosuke Hayashi W 10
Yusuke Morishima
Oscar Chauke KO 5 Wonga Mhlana
Benjamin Flores KO 4 Pedro Miranda
Nestor Rocha KO 9 Cesar Morales
Ryuichi Okahashi Tech. Win 5
Sung-Kook Kim
Juan Manuel Lopez KO 2 Omar Adorno

Bantamweights

Abner Mares W 12 Damian Marchiano
Oliver Lontchi W 12 Cruz Carbajal
Dante Cantiga W 10 Sonny Gonzales
Malik Bouziane W 10 John Bikai
Richard Olisa Tech. Win 9
Celso Danggod
Diego Silva KO 9
Leonardo Fernandez
Nobuo Nashiro KO 3
Petchklongpai Sor Thantip
Nehomar Cermeno KO 2 Marino Montiel

Junior Bantamweights

Martin Castillo W 10 Jonathon Perez

Flyweights

Takefumi Sakata D 12
Denkaosan Kaovichit
(*Retains WBA Title*)
Wandee Singwancha W 12
Fernando Lumacad
Juma Seleman D 10 Shabani Madilu
Yukio Wadamine KO 1
Deeden Sithsaithong
Jin-Ki Jung W 12 Armando Casa
Rayonta Whitfield KO 2
Domingo Guillen

Junior Flyweights

Edgar Sosa KO 4 Roberto Leyva
(*Retains WBC Title*)
Muvhus Nedzanani W 12 John Molina
Juanito Rubillar KO 5 Byung-Joo Lee
Sonny Boy Jaro KO 1 Alfred Nagal

Strawweights

Omar Soto W 10 Marlon Chavarria
Nao Ikeyama W 10
Krisztina Belinszky
Anri Nakagawa W 8 Sho Moriyama
Roman Gonzalez KO 1 Eriberto Gejon
Toshikazu Waga W 12
Ngaoprajan Sithsaithong
Denver Cuello Tech. Win 3
Rollen Del Castillo

David Haye KO 7 Jean-Marc Mormeck

Paris, France: Evander Holyfield has always been the quintessential role model for Haye, 199¾, London, England. The 27-year-old's goal was to win the world cruiserweight title and go on to emulate "The Real Deal" by moving up to heavyweight and being successful there. He accomplished part one in a thrilling manner at the Palais des Sports Marcel Cerdan by climbing off the floor in the fourth round before stopping Mormeck, 199¼, Pantin, France, in round seven to win the WBC and WBA cruiserweight titles and THE RING world championship.

A silver medalist at the 2001 world amateur championships, Haye has long been tipped for stardom, but a knockdown suffered at the hands of obscure African super middleweight Lolenga Mock in 2003 and a fifth-round stoppage defeat by fellow Briton Carl Thompson in 2004 demonstrated a worrying vulnerability. He used these experiences to learn, to rededicate himself to his profession, and to come back stronger, but against veteran 35-year-old Mormeck, who has been in the trenches many times in his career, Haye, 20-1 (19), was under pressure to deliver.

From the opening round, Haye tried to maximize his six-inch advantage in reach by establishing his left jab, but Mormeck maintained a tight defense that proved difficult to penetrate. So the challenger went to the body, digging in hard rights and lefts designed to bring the Frenchman's hands down. Mormeck, 33-4 (22), landed a grazing right to Haye's chin in the final 30 seconds, but the challenger's assertive start won him the opening round.

Urged by trainer Richie Giachetti between rounds to do more, Mormeck became more aggressive in the second round, forcing Haye to the ropes early and unloading combinations to the head and body, catching the Englishman, who held his left hand low, with several right hooks to the head. Haye hit back with more bodypunches, but Mormeck was more satisfied with his work as the bell rang.

"Let your punches go," Giachetti told Mormeck as he came off his stool for the fourth, and the Frenchman complied, nailing Haye in a neutral corner with a left hook and follow up right to the chin just a minute into the round. Haye's legs betrayed him and another right hand caught him on the side of the face as he took a knee, wisely in the circumstances. He did well to survive for the rest of the round, as Mormeck was unable to land Haye in further trouble despite catching him with several more hard shots. "I was very weight-drained and my legs completely went when he caught me," Haye reflected. "I told myself, *I've got to get up.* This guy was a big puncher and I think I showed class and patience. My strategy held together. I knew I had to pace myself."

Haye came back strongly in the fifth, landing a solid right uppercut and a left hook to the head, but Mormeck's pressure was still intense. To Haye's immense credit, he maintained his cool, weathered the storm, and began to re-establish his boxing skills in the sixth, firing out his jab and keeping Mormeck at bay while picking him off with solid rights and left hooks. "Keep your discipline," Haye's trainer, Adam Booth, told him calmly back in the corner. Nobody in the arena could have foretold that the end was so close.

In the seventh, a succession of hard hooks to the body hurt Mormeck before Haye landed a cuffing right and followed up with a solid right uppercut to the jaw. Mormeck's legs buckled immediately, and an overhand right by Haye that caught Mormeck around the ear knocked the Frenchman down in Haye's corner. Mormeck, badly shaken, managed to rise before Italian referee Guido Cavallieri had reached the count of eight, but, correctly, the official ruled that he was in no position to continue, waving the fight over at the 1:56 mark.

"The old David Haye would probably have got stuck in and I might have run out of steam," Haye suggested. "At heavyweight, I'll be able to throw a lot more punches because I won't have to take off so much weight. The legs weren't there at cruiserweight, but they'll definitely be there at heavyweight."

Promoter: **Don King Productions**

(11-10-07)

Brian Doogan

PHOTO BY MEHDI FEDOUACH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Haye outslugs Mormeck to win cruiserweight crown

Victor Ortiz KO 1 Carlos Maussa

New York, New York: Fans who remember Maussa for his seventh-round knockout of Vivian Harris to claim the WBA super lightweight title in June 2005 were probably expecting the Argentinean rubber man to give the 20-year-old Ortiz a decent test. Not that anybody ever mistook Maussa for a great fighter, or even a particularly good one, but his height (5'10½"), reach (73"), and wildly unorthodox style had proven a tough nut for even the best in the division to crack. Just ask Ricky Hatton, who had to endure almost nine foul-infested rounds before ending Maussa's bid to win the world junior welterweight title with a crushing left hook. Ortiz, however, only needed two punches to end matters at the 1:47 mark of the first round of a scheduled 10-rounder.

The fight, which opened the pay-per-view portion of the Miguel Cotto-Shane Mosley card at Madison Square Garden, was a great

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Ortiz disposes of Maussa in quick order

[The Ring Fighter of the Month]

Joe Calzaghe

Joe Calzaghe's creative publicist, Fred Sternburg, sent out press releases in the weeks before the super middleweight champ's November showdown with Mikkel Kessler nicknaming the Dane "Where's Waldo?" because he'd all but disappeared in the face of numerous promotional obligations. On fight night, however, there was no need for the nickname. Kessler showed up. He came to fight and he came to win. He brought his "A" game.

And it wasn't good enough.

When the second-best fighter in the division fights as perfectly as he possibly can, and you beat him comfortably, that makes a serious statement. Calzaghe's the champion in every sense of the word, and considering that his two most spectacular victories have come in the last two years, the 35-year-old, incredibly, may just be hitting his stride now.

Pulling the "Where's Waldo?" routine in the build-up to a fight is unprofessional and arguably quite foolish. But for Calzaghe opponents, going missing on fight night may be a wise move. So far, 44 opponents have been left wishing they hadn't shown up. Kessler was the best of them, and Calzaghe outboxed him like he was just another challenger. That's why the Welshman is indisputably the best in the world at 168 pounds. And that's why he's indisputably the Fighter of the Month.

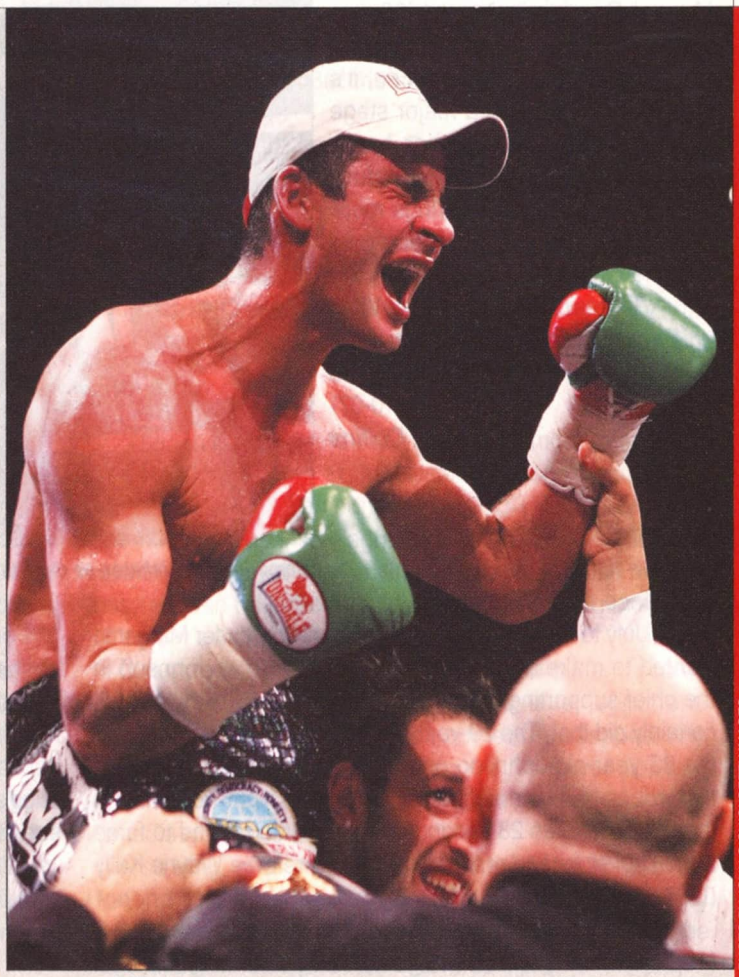


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

opportunity for Ortiz to showcase his skills, and you really couldn't have asked more of the 20-year-old prospect from Oxnard, California, than to take out his opponent inside of a round. But the usually durable Maussa folded so quickly that Ortiz probably worked up more of a sweat jogging down the aisle from his dressing room than he did disposing of "El Apostol."

For about a minute, it looked like Maussa's loosey-goosey style might indeed give Ortiz a bit of a problem. Punching from unexpected angles as he flopped around the ring like a spastic giraffe, the 36-year-old veteran managed to tag Ortiz, 141½, with a couple of looping right hands. But his success was short-lived.

Unaffected by Maussa's offerings, Ortiz, a natural right-hander who fights out of a southpaw stance, stepped inside, connected with a right uppercut, and then landed a twisting left to the cheek. The punch didn't look that devastating, but Maussa, 142, slammed into the canvas as if shot through the head. Referee Johnny Callas (USA) counted him out, and that was that.

The only thing the bout proved was that Maussa, 20-5 (18), is no longer a viable opponent for anybody remotely close to world class. He'd only fought once between the Hatton and Ortiz defeats (a 12-round decision loss to Manuel Garnica in August '06), so rust could conceivably have played a part in his quick exit. Even so, it's clear that his time on a major stage is over. Ortiz, on the other hand, will undoubtedly be back, hopefully against somebody who brings more than a faded memory of his one brief moment of glory.

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Top Rank, Golden Boy Promotions**
(11-10-07)
Nigel Collins

Antonio Margarito KO 1 Golden Johnson

New York, New York: In his first fight since a disappointing decision loss in July to Paul Williams, welterweight contender Margarito wanted to make a dramatic impression against Johnson in the chief supporting bout underneath Cotto-Mosley, and he certainly did that. The 29-year-old Tijuana, Mexico, fighter had the 33-year-old Johnson on the canvas almost as soon as their robes had come off, and he dropped him twice more in the first 2 minutes 28 seconds of the opening round to force a merciful stoppage of the mismatch by referee Wayne Kelly (USA).

As effective as Margarito was, beating Johnson, 25-8-3 (18), meant very little. If Margarito thought winning this fight would automatically thrust him into a position to face Cotto, he should remember that the fighter Cotto beat in the main event, Mosley, had knocked out Johnson in a lightweight title fight nearly nine years earlier, back when Johnson actually was a contender.

Having lost to Williams partially because he started too slowly, Margarito made a point of starting quickly in this fight. Less than a minute in, Margarito, 35-5 (26), sent Johnson to the mat with a hard right. Giving Johnson little chance to use any veteran guile to get through the round, Margarito, 147, quickly jumped on him again, using brutal uppercuts and sending him down a second and third time under a barrage of punches.

"I wanted to show everyone I belong at the top of the welterweight division," Margarito said after the fight. "I do think I showed them. I told everyone I was going to have a fast start. I want the opportunity to fight the winner of the main event."

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Margarito rocks Johnson en route to first-round knockout

For Johnson, 146¾, San Antonio, Texas, this performance suggests that it's time the 14-year veteran start to think seriously about retirement. After a 29-month absence from the ring, he came back in '05 and went 3-0-1 against decent opposition, but the emphatic nature of this loss to Margarito suggests that Johnson may not have another successful streak like that in him.

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Top Rank, Golden Boy Promotions**
(11-10-07)
Joe Santoliquito

Takefumi Sakata D 12 Denkaosen Kaowichit

Saitama, Japan: In his second title defense, WBA flyweight beltholder Sakata, 112, Tokyo, Japan, barely retained his strap on a split draw with Denkaosen, 111½, Samui, Thailand, over 12 seesaw heats at the Super Arena. Sakata came off the canvas in the opening session and dominated the contest from the eighth round on to pull even on the cards. Mikael Hook (Sweden) had it 114-112 for Sakata, Francisco Martinez (New Zealand) scored 115-112 for Denkaosen, and Gustavo Padilla (Panama) saw it 113-113. The referee was Mark Nelson (USA), who penalized a crucial point from the challenger in the 12th round for repeatedly holding despite three warnings.

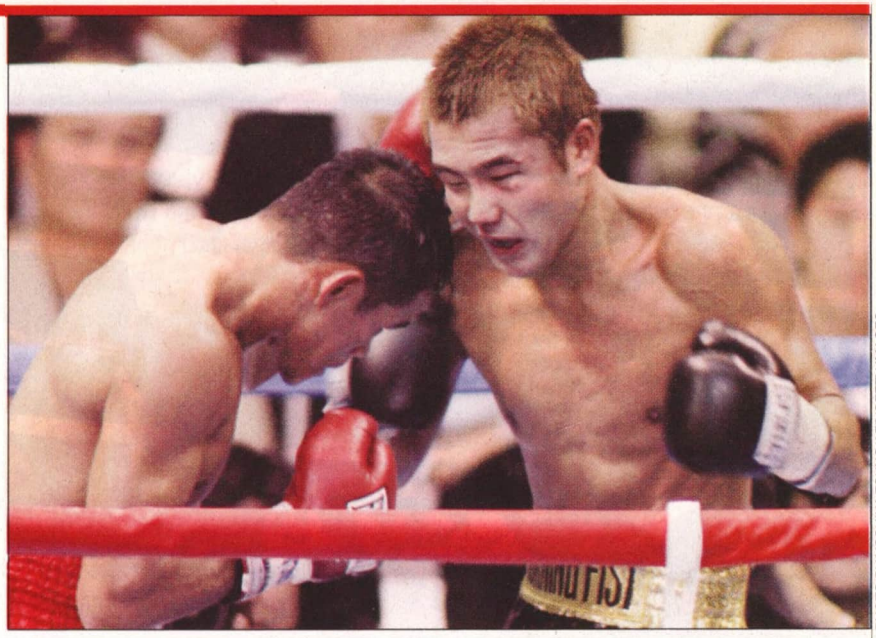


PHOTO BY YOSHIKA TSUNO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kaowichit and Sakata battle to a 12-round draw

Had the ref not deducted a point, Denkaosen would have earned a split decision. THE RING, however, saw it 114-112 for Sakata, so the penalty actually prevented a minor miscarriage of justice, in this reporter's view.

The combatants fought on even terms in the first round until the Thai landed a well-timed straight right over the titlist's left jab and dropped him on the seat of his trunks with 19 seconds to go in the round. Sakata, 27, promptly regained his feet and lasted the round. Aware of his carelessness in the previous round, Sakata moved well and took the initiative with more jabs and left hooks in the second, but Denkaosen, 31, connected with a solid left hook in the closing seconds.

The third saw Sakata become busier with light jabs and double left hooks from the belly to the face, winning a point. In the fourth, Denkaosen turned loose with very strong shots and nullified Sakata's jabs with a right uppercut that landed effectively.

Sakata was in command in the fifth, making good use of versatile lefts upstairs and downstairs as Denkaosen missed many strong shots. The Thai veteran, who had won 20 straight fights against nondescript opposition since a 2002 loss to then-titlist Eric Morel, dominated the sixth and seventh, as he unleashed very solid rights to the fast-moving but light-punching Japanese fighter. Furthermore, Sakata sustained a gash over the right eyebrow caused by a butt in the seventh.

The tide, however, dramatically turned in the eighth, when the Thai began to run out of gas and became less aggressive. Sakata persistently worked the body to weaken the fading challenger in the eighth. Sakata showed his best in the 10th, as he kept peppering his fatigued opponent exclusively to the midsection, pinning him to the ropes. The Thai became so tired and clinched so often that the crowd wondered if he would be able to go the distance. But Sakata, full of abundant stamina but short of convincing power, failed to punish the challenger effectively enough to finish him.

In the 12th and final stanza, Sakata, 31-4-2 (15), was still fresh with busy jabs, while the visibly fading Denkaosen kept holding him time and again. Referee Nelson made a good decision to penalize a point from the exhausted challenger. Ironically enough, Denkaosen, 40-1-1 (16), awoke after this point deduction and began to retaliate with right hands.

It looked like a marathon race in which a runner far behind caught up with a frontrunner and was slightly ahead of him at the finish. But the judges could give Sakata no better than a draw.

Promoter: **Kyoei Promotions**

(11-4-07)

Joe Koizumi

Robert Guerrero KO 1 Martin Honorio

Tohono O'odham Nation, Arizona: They say that sometimes love or laughter can be the best medicine. But other times, it's a sweet, simple left to the chin that does the trick.

"The Ghost" Guerrero dealt with much more than a little post-Halloween fright at the Desert Diamond Casino near Tucson, as he overcame the considerable distraction of his wife Casey's leukemia diagnosis just prior to the scheduled contest. As it turned out, he needed just 56 seconds to show that he wasn't distracted at all and to enjoy a moment of triumph in a trying time.

Guerrero, 126, Gilroy, California, rushed out and scored with short southpaw jabs against his taller opponent. Honorio, 126, Mexico City, was content to respond with tentative, probing sticks of his own. He never showed authority behind his opening volleys and Guerrero immediately made him pay.

A sizzling, straight left laser splattered the 27-year-old Honorio to the canvas like a rejected germ. An already frenzied crowd went loco from the highlight-reel blast, maybe the best punch Guerrero has thrown as a pro.

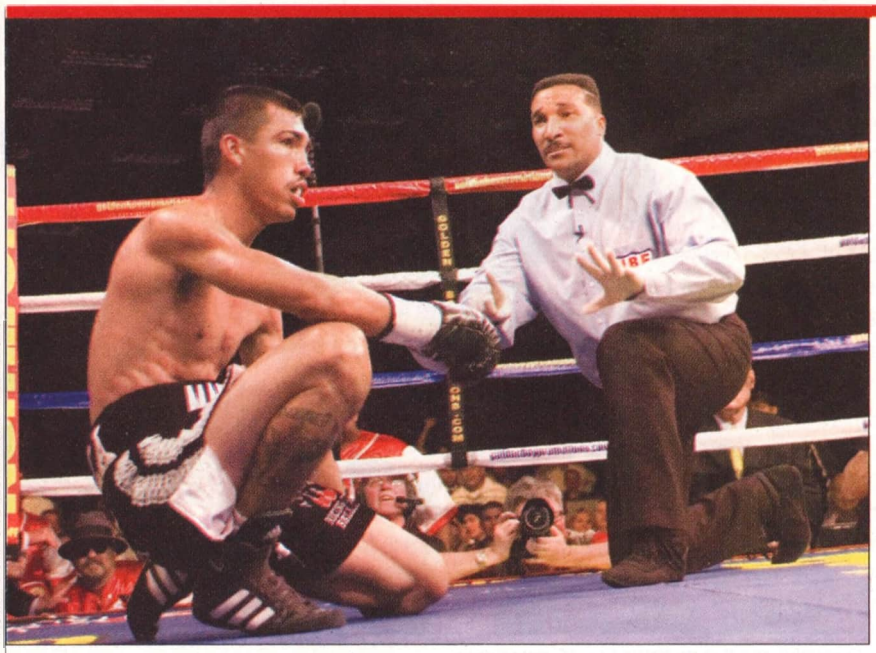


PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHT WIRE IMAGES

Honorio never made it out of the first round against Guerrero

Somehow, Honorio made it up, only to wobble across the canvas dizzily. The shell-shocked Honorio, 24-3-1 (12), stumbled and crashed into the strands, and referee Tony Weeks (USA) had little choice but to wave it off.

Guerrero has had uneven recent showings since he started facing stronger foes. In this bout, it appeared he's settled into his role as an elite-level performer. His duke-out diagnosis now indicates he's ready for consideration among the very best featherweights. But Guerrero, 24, said his present pounding prescription might involve moving up to the more lucrative 130-pound division.

"I wasn't thinking about the fight at all, but my wife told me to go do what I do," said Guerrero, 21-1-1 (14), afterward, in explaining his difficult decision to compete. "I was expecting 12 rounds, but I was determined, and this was the night to end it early. We worked on a chopping left hand and he lunged right into it."

Promoters: **Golden Boy Promotions, Romanza Productions**
Television: **Showtime**
(11-3-07)
Phil Woolever

Lucian Bute KO II Alejandro Berrio

Montreal, Quebec: An impressive decision against rugged Sakio Bika this past June landed Bute his opportunity against Berrio, who laid claim to the vacant IBF strap in Germany with a third-round stoppage over Robert Steiglitz in the same month. Berrio had been fortunate to capitalize on a void left by legitimate super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe, who opted to vacate the belt rather than face his mandatory. But the Colombian was not fortunate to have to defend against the talented Bute.

Regardless of the title's authenticity, Bute, 27, was supported by a raucous 13,244 fans at Montreal's Bell Centre, on hand to see him capture the title with a stunning 11th-round stoppage of Berrio that came only after he encountered some difficult rounds from the hard-punching Colombian.

Romania-born Bute, who has called Montreal home for the last four years, found himself on the receiving end of some heavy right leads from Berrio that had his right eye swelling by as early as the second round. A rare fighter who boxes effectively while backing away from his opponent, southpaw Bute, 167, found it difficult to land counters against the crowding Berrio, 26-5 (25), who kept busy by accurately slamming home an assortment of awkward blows.

Bute, 21-0 (17), boxed smoothly enough to take the first, but gave the next four rounds away to Berrio's aggressive right leads and superior inside work at close quarters. Bute finally found his counterpunching range after honing in with three accurate straight lefts to close the fifth. The punches were not enough to garner him the round, but they worked to steer the momentum in his favor.

Bute's first damaging work came in the sixth after a counter right hook compelled Berrio, 167¾, to drop his hands, turn, and nonchalantly walk toward the ropes. Bute cut off the ring in pursuit, but unsure if he was being drawn into a trap, studied Berrio with caution as he picked his moment to unload with a clean right-left combination. Berrio had engaged in a measured attack up to that moment, but began to respond with reckless, looping blows that Bute found easier to read and counter. Midway into the round, a lead right hook shook an off-balance Berrio again, and Bute soon started to find a home for his jab and short two-punch combinations.

Undeterred, Berrio, 33, kept up his attack in the ensuing rounds, landing a number of hard rights in the seventh, while Bute sought to bounce on his toes and jab while creating openings for his left cross and uppercuts to the body. A solid overhand right in the eighth rattled Berrio and sent him walking toward the ropes once more, but a still-too-respectful Bute could not find the right sequence of punches to finish the job.

Enjoying the advantages of fighting in his adopted hometown, Bute was ahead by six points on two cards and four points on the third going into the 11th, although the fight looked much closer, with THE RING giving Bute the edge by a score of 96-94. Landing precise combinations, Bute had proven himself the more fluid puncher through rounds nine and 10, but had fielded some heavy artillery in return amid numerous heated exchanges.

Though Bute had managed to rock Berrio on a few occasions, there was no indication of the decisive finish that was about to unfold in the 11th. Bute scored with a short lead left and crisp right hook against a free-swinging Berrio

early in the round before landing with a short right hook that sent him backing to the ropes. This time, Bute was certain of the damage he had inflicted. Immediately, he jumped in and manhandled a stunned Berrio in a neutral corner, where he unleashed three successive right hands that savagely snapped Berrio's head back each time before leaving him slumped against the ropes, out on his feet. Referee Marlon B. Wright (Canada) jumped in to save Berrio at the 1:27 mark.

"[Bute] was taking too many punches in the third, so we had to make adjustments. He got too comfortable too fast," Bute's trainer, Stephane Larouche, said afterward. "He fought a great fight for a guy who only has 20 fights and has been boxing four years as a pro. There was a lot of pressure with so many people watching. It's amazing that he was able to manage the situation. A lot of fighters would fade out in a situation like that."

Bute is expected to make an optional defense early in the new year, with Markus Beyer, Librado Andrade, and Cristian Sanavia named as potential opponents.

Promoter: **Interbox**
(10-19-07)
Paul Salgado

Alexander Povetkin KO II Chris Byrd

Erfurt, Germany: The concept of an elimination tournament to clear up the mess that is the heavyweight division is a good one, but the IBF's idea is limited to finding a suitable challenger to Wladimir Klitschko. Considering that two of the four men in the tournament, Calvin Brock and Byrd, have already been beaten by the 31-year-old Ukrainian, there was limited excitement about this initiative. Still, Povetkin, 226¾, Tschechow, Russia, may emerge as a viable threat. Certainly he looked dangerous as he dominated Byrd, 211¾, Las Vegas, Nevada, before he stopped him in the 11th round at the Messehalle.

The 28-year-old Russian is a former Olympic Games and world amateur champion and has the workrate and wherewithal to be a handful for Klitschko. Certainly, he had too much for Byrd, whose seventh-round stoppage defeat by Klitschko in April 2006 to lose the IBF heavyweight title demonstrated that decline has set in. Six years earlier, despite losing overwhelmingly, he was able to go the distance with Klitschko, but even survival is beyond the 37-year-old Byrd these days.

"I have the utmost of respect for Chris Byrd because he used to be one of my idols when I was younger," Povetkin announced cordially before the bout. "It was always my goal to get a picture with him, and now I have to fight against him. I am convinced I will win."

Within minutes of the opening bell, most observers were convinced too. Southpaw Byrd flapped with his right hand in the opening round in a doomed attempt to keep Povetkin at bay, but the Russian was simply too busy, too ambitious, and too confident to be fiddled out of the fight. He got cut around the right eye from an accidental clash of heads in the third round, but by the fourth, he was smothering Byrd against the ropes and landing a stream of hooks with both hands to the head and body as well as a solid right uppercut and hard straight lefts and rights.

The problem for Byrd, 40-4-1 (21), was that he had neither the firepower nor the legs to change the course of the fight, though he got on the front foot in the fifth and landed some right hooks and lefts to win the round. But in the overall context of the fight, this was an aberration, and the pressure exerted by the Russian began to tell again in the sixth when Byrd was caught by hard shots to his head and body, taking far more punishment than he ever did in his heyday.

The beating continued over the next few rounds with Povetkin, 14-0 (11), picking off Byrd at long range and working him over in close, especially when he backed the American against the ropes. A succession of right hands even raised some puffiness on the left side of Byrd's face. When Povetkin landed a left hook to Byrd's chin in the eighth, the Russian stood off, almost in expectation of a knockdown, but Byrd has always been brave. The accumulation of punches began to tell, however, and when Povetkin landed two left uppercuts in the 11th and a right cross-left hook combination to the jaw, Byrd retreated to his corner. He took another hard left uppercut and the American referee, Wayne Kelly, intervened at the 1:52 mark. Byrd's father, Joe, who trains him, had indicated to the official that it was time to call a halt and, as he did, Byrd's son, Justin, climbed through the ropes to embrace him.

Byrd is probably finished as a top-level heavyweight, but another one from the former Soviet Union has been uncovered.

Promoters: **Wilfried Sauerland, Vladimir Hrunov**
(10-27-07)
Brian Doogan

PHOTO BY JENS-ULRICH KOCH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Povetkin drives Byrd back with a right

Eddie Chambers W 12 Calvin Brock

Tacoma, Washington: To commemorate *ShoBox's* 100th telecast, viewers were swept down memory lane into a time reminiscent of what was known as the "Lost Generation Of Heavyweights" during the 1980s as Chambers, 231½, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, pounded out a tedious 12-round split decision over the once-promising Brock, 241, Charlotte, North Carolina, before an uneasy crowd at the Emerald Queen Casino. This was the second of two semifinals in an IBF heavyweight elimination tournament, the other won by Alexander Povetkin over Chris Byrd, to determine a mandatory challenger to Wladimir Klitschko.

In the first round, Brock, 31-2 (23), displayed good lateral movement and threw picturesque four- and five-punch combinations while winning the round. Chambers, 30-0 (16), came back in the second with a stiff jab and brain-crunching right hands that had "The Boxing Banker's" face swelling up early. Smiling, winking, and making facial contortions, "Fast Eddie" would unleash deceptively quick jabs and overhand rights on the bewildered but courageous Brock.

Each round followed a pattern of the 25-year-old Chambers moving forward with hands up, showing excellent defense, while the 32-year-old Brock threw artistically sublime but fundamentally ineffective combinations. When Brock paused, Chambers would unload with a lead right or a jab followed by an overhand right. In the sixth, Brock almost went down from a damaging combination. Only the ropes stopped him from going horizontal, though he never seemed in any danger of being stopped.

The crowd, restless and bored, turned their attention toward a fight in the stands in the eighth round and everyone stood up to watch the amateurs have at it as Chambers and Brock continued their slow shuffle. As security guards and police officers rushed into the crowd to apprehend the troublemakers, Chambers continued his assault on his college-educated opponent who represented the United States as a super heavyweight Olympian in the year 2000.

Referee Robert Byrd (USA) did a good job of letting the fighters box while making himself inconspicuous. The few clinches were brief and both fighters should be commended for not spending the evening hugging each other.

By the ninth, The Banker's face was swollen, puffed, and purple, and Chambers, who defeated the comebacking Dominick Guinn in May of 2007, continued his methodical domination of Brock as booing and calls for action filled the night air. Boxing fans love the sight of blood and knockouts, and this confrontation would offer them neither. It was a pedestrian affair—not without precedent when two heavyweights meet in the squared circle.

The conclusion should have been without suspense, but when Judge Tom McDonough (USA) scored the fight 115-113 for Brock, an angry collective gasp spread through the crowd and the tension became palpable. A middle-aged man in the crowd exclaimed, "I didn't know that Calvin moved to Seattle!"

Sanity returned when Glen Hamada (USA) and Steve Weisfeld (USA) scored the fight 115-113 for Chambers. THE RING had Chambers winning handily, 119-111.

Afterward, Brock sat in his dressing room, boxing trunks around his ankles. His swollen face covered in sweat, he wore an expression of exhaustion and defeat. His pain-filled eyes scanned the floor as he searched for the right words. "This isn't over," he whispered softly. "I'll be back."

Down the hall, the unmarked Chambers was celebrating after a man with a plastic bottle demanded his urine, then quickly departed like a thief in the night.

"Calvin is a strong guy and he can take punishment," Chambers said. "Next time I'm going to step it up."

Chambers is now scheduled to meet Povetkin, with the winner expected to fight Klitschko for the IBF title.

Promoters: **Goossen Tutor Promotions, Main Events, Brian Halquist Productions**
Television: **Showtime**
(11-2-07)
Oliver W. Tuthill Jr.

Daisuke Naito W 12 Daiki Kameda

Tokyo, Japan: WBC flyweight titlist Naito, 112, made a successful first defense by busily punching a puzzling peek-a-boo challenger, previously unbeaten Kameda, 112, to pound out a unanimous decision over 12 rounds at Ariake

PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Referee Vic Drakulich penalizes Kameda in Tokyo foulfest

Colosseum. Dave Moretti (USA) and Harold Laurens (Curacao) both tallied 117-107, and Malcolm Bulner (Australia) saw it 116-108, all in favor of Naito.

The judges didn't have a hard job, but the same could not be said of referee Vic Drakulich (USA), who might have experienced the toughest night of his career in terms of separating the hot-headed combatants from numerous clinches and dealing with an assortment of fouls. The fighters fell down to the canvas time and again throughout the bout. Naito was penalized for hitting Kameda on the deck after they fell together in the ninth. Drakulich decisively deducted three points from Kameda in the final session: a point for throwing the beltholder and two more for lifting and throwing him again.

PHOTO BY FRIEDMANN VOGEL/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Sturm hangs on to WBA middleweight strap by holding Griffin to a draw

In the early going of the bout between Tokyo fighters, the 18-year-old Kameda protected his face with a tight guard and kept going forward without throwing jabs, while Naito, 15 years his senior at 33, started peppering the stylist with light combinations. Naito dominated the first three rounds with ease.

The fourth saw Kameda land a straight right and a left hook on Naito, who missed plenty of shots aimed at the onrushing challenger. The open scoring system showed the tallies after the fourth to be 39-37 twice and 40-36, all for Naito.

As the rounds wore on, Kameda proved more powerful than the titlist, but threw just one punch at a time, usually the left hook. After the eighth, the scores were announced as 78-74 and 79-73 twice, all for the defending beltholder.

Up to this point, it wasn't a bad fight, as the challenger kept stalking with single strong shots and Naito, 32-2-2 (20), responded to Kameda, 10-1 (7), with lighter but busier combinations. It became a wild one from the ninth on, however. They often wrestled and fell down together, and in the ninth, the frustrated Naito hit the reckless challenger in the back of the head while they stayed on the deck. The third man promptly penalized him for the blatant infraction.

But the worst was to come, as Kameda threw Naito to the mat twice in the final round, and also attempted headbutts and thumbings. They hit the canvas by wrestling each other no less than four times in the 12th round. In the end, it was a disappointing fight, especially given the Japanese fans' high expectations.

A few days after the fight, the Japan Boxing Commission handed out suspensions, as the Kameda corner was determined, based on recorded video evidence, to prove that the challenger hurt Naito with fouls. The fighter received a one-year suspension, and his father and lead trainer, Shiro, was suspended indefinitely for encouraging the intentional fouls.

Promoter: Kyoei Promotions

(10-11-07)

Joe Koizumi

Felix Sturm D 12 Randy Griffin

Halle, Germany: Sturm, 159¾, Hamburg, Germany, is still best remembered most for a controversial defeat on points to Oscar De La Hoya three months before De La Hoya lost to Bernard Hopkins, but he has since won, lost, and regained the WBA middleweight title and remains a competent and exciting, if not dominant, presence in the division. Against Griffin, 159½, Louisville, Kentucky, he was made to fight all the way in a crowd-pleasing encounter at Gerry Weber Stadium before barely managing to retain the title for the second time in this reign.

Griffin's sole defeat came in 2002, when he lost to Ugandan journeyman James Lubwama over six rounds at Dover Downs, Delaware. In his bout previous to traveling to Germany, he clearly outpointed Western Samoa's Maselino Masoe, from whom Sturm originally claimed the WBA belt, but this was his first fight outside the United States.

"I want to use the great motivation I have to win more fights," Sturm declared. "I would also like to unify all the belts." A box-off with Arthur Abraham, the Germany-based Armenian, with the winner to take on Kelly Pavlik or Jermain Taylor, who are due to meet again on February 16, would be welcomed by everyone. But a rematch with Griffin may come first.

An immediate return would certainly be fair, for the challenger put up a spirited effort in a close fight that was exciting throughout. Sturm boxed well behind his left jab in the opening round and landed a good right uppercut to the

jaw of Griffin, who continued to come forward no matter what the German threw his way. The American's problem was finding a way to penetrate Sturm's peek-a-boo defense, but he managed to land solid hooks in the second before Sturm rocked the challenger with hard right uppercuts in the third and fifth rounds. Griffin, 31, was game and the blistering exchanges were competitive, but Sturm, 28, was on top.

This changed in the sixth round when Griffin pressured Sturm, 28-2-1 (12), against the ropes and unloaded, taking this round and the seventh. The pace diminished in round eight, but Griffin, 24-1-3 (12), remained strong, matching Sturm's skill with some pretty good boxing of his own. By the 11th round, Sturm realized that the result was in the balance and he came forward in an attempt to seize the initiative from the American. They unloaded with big shots in the final round, with the crowd on their feet, before Sturm landed a late flurry. Stanley Christodoulou (South Africa) scored 115-114 for Sturm, but Antonio Requena (Venezuela) had it 117-114 for Griffin. Nelson Vazquez (Puerto Rico) saw it 114-114, as did THE RING. The referee was Guillermo Perez Pineda from Panama.

Promoter: **Universum-Box**
(10-20-07)
Brian Doogan

Steve Molitor W 12 Fahsung 3K-Battery

Rama, Ontario: In his last four fights, Molitor, 122, Sarnia, Ontario, had integrated respectable knockout power to complement his accomplished boxing skills and came into his bout with Fahsung confident that he would end matters by the sixth round. But a quick study of Fahsung's resume, now 58-9-1 (35), indicated a stern chin was among his primary assets, as only Manny Pacquiao proved capable of stopping the rugged fighter from Bangkok, Thailand. Since that 2004 bout, Fahsung, 121½, had built a 14-fight win streak against largely nondescript opponents, positioning himself for a shot at Molitor's IBF crown in what was the Canadian's second defense.

Returning to the Casino Rama, where he impressively knocked out South Africa's Takalani Ndlovu in June, Molitor, 27, clearly possessed the superior skill, but seemed overly conscious of providing his 5,217 hometown patrons with another impressive display of firepower. As a result, he opened himself to some unnecessary punches that would be ill-advised against some of the top-ranking members of the 122-pound class.

Molitor, 25-0 (10), boxed with uncharacteristic aggressiveness, unleashing a variety of hard, crisp combinations that merely slowed the Thai's attack, but never threatened his resolve. Although he was handicapped by size and speed, Fahsung, 33, grinded forward behind a steady jab and continuously uncorked whistling overhand lefts that Molitor read with ease.

Fighting against another southpaw appeared to work favorably for Molitor, who took advantage of the close distance by repeatedly dropping sharp counter lefts over Fahsung's consistently slower jab. In the fifth, Molitor went to the body with conviction, designed to soften Fahsung for a full-on assault in the sixth where each punch thrown by "The Canadian Kid" was clearly bent on knocking his opponent out.

Fahsung not only survived, he unleashed a stunner in the seventh, catching the Canadian titleholder on the point of the chin, buckling his knees and splaying him backward, where he was caught by the ropes. A wide-eyed Molitor reflexively bounced upright looking more embarrassed than stunned by the momentary defensive lapse, and Rocky Zolniercyzk (Canada), refereeing his first major title bout, failed to correctly call the knockdown. The punch nonetheless won Fahsung his only round of the match, although for the rest of the night his redoubled effort to catch Molitor with the same shot would end in failure.

Sporting a small welt under his right eye, Molitor asserted his superior boxing skills over the latter half of the fight and commanded the action in mid-ring with a dominant jab. Despite being outclassed, Fahsung remained undaunted, although his one-dimensional attack, coupled with Molitor's deft movement, made the action predictable as the bout wore on. In the last round, Molitor chose to stand in and engage in several entertaining exchanges to give the fans their money's worth, but, at the final bell, the only suspense left was whether the any of the judges had chosen to award Fahsung a winning round. As it turned out, Robert Gonzalez (USA) gave Molitor a shutout with a score of 120-108, while judges Jean Williams (USA) and Shafeeq Rashada (USA) scored 119-109 in favor of Molitor, as did THE RING.

At the postfight press conference, Molitor displayed a slightly swollen hand, stating he bruised his right knuckle while gunning for a knockout in the middle rounds.

"I wasn't my usual self tonight. I was a little bit more flat-footed and looking for the knockout. That's how I hurt my hand," said Molitor. "[Fahsung] was a tough customer. He took some big shots. He took some good bodyshots, but sustained his energy throughout the whole fight. But I still got the 'W' and that's all that matters."

Promoter: **Orion Sports Management**
(10-27-07)
Paul Salgado

Edison Miranda KO 5 Henry Porras

Hollywood, Florida: Five months after a punishing knockout loss to future middleweight champ Kelly Pavlik, Miranda returned as a super middleweight (actually, slightly over his new division's limit at 169¼) and picked an ideal opponent to come back against. Porras' defense lived up to his surname, and the hard-hitting "Pantera" found all of the holes, sending Porras back to Costa Rica with his third kayo loss in his last six fights.

Though this contest at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino was one-sided (as expected, Miranda was tabbed as an 11-1 favorite), it was, like most Miranda fights, entertaining. Miranda, Carolina, Puerto Rico, via Buenaventura, Colombia, started more slowly and cautiously than he usually does, but

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Miranda got back in the win column by stopping Porras

it wasn't long before he realized Porras, 167¾, wasn't offering any dangerous resistance, so in the third round, he turned up the heat with a neck-snapping left jab and combination punching. Porras, 36, had no jab of his own, and though he fared well when he got in close, the times he worked his way inside were few.

A decade younger than his opponent at 26 and several levels better, Miranda hurt Porras in the fifth and backed him into a corner, then unloaded a torrent of right-hand bombs while Porras, 33-7-1 (25), did nothing but cover up. Referee Frank Santore Jr. (USA) did the only sensible thing and rescued the Costa Rican at the 2:45 mark.

"This is the new and improved Edison," Miranda, 29-2 (25), said afterward. "I will take on anyone to get back into the title picture."

Promoters: **DiBella Entertainment, Warriors Boxing**

(10-30-07)

Donnie Nietes W 12
Pornsawan Kratingdaenggym

Cebu, Philippines: It was boxer vs. brawler, technical skill vs. raw power. In the end, Filipino Nietes, the boxer, held on to an early lead and won a hard-fought 12-round decision over Thailand's Pornsawan, capturing the vacant WBO minimumweight title in the process.

In February of this year, ALA Boxing Gym founder Tony Aldeguer saw his lifelong dream for a major titleholder slip through his grasp when Z Gorres dropped a hotly disputed 12-round decision to WBO super flyweight titlist Fernando Montiel. Daniel Ponce De Leon further derailed Aldegeur's dreams when he flattened hot prospect Rey "Boom Boom" Bautista in a single round. But Nietes, 105, Cebu, Philippines, got the job done for Aldeguer, becoming the first major alphabet beltholder produced by the ALA Gym.

In the past decade, Thailand's boxers have generally fared poorly when fighting abroad. Whether because of the change of climate, unfamiliar surroundings, difference in cuisine, or poor competition while fighting at home, Thai fighters have had little success when fighting outside of their native country. The one recent exception, Somsak Sithchatchawal, scored a huge upset in France over Mayhar Monshipour—but was trounced in just three rounds by Celestino Caballero in his first defense.

In October of 2005, five out of six Thais lost to their Mexican opponents while fighting on a card in the United States, and earlier this year, after fighting 17 bouts in Thailand, light flyweight contender Nethra Sasiprapa was knocked out in Argentina by Juan Carlos Reveco in the eighth round of their contest. Clearly, Thais have a problem fighting on the road, and Pornsawan, 105, Sakaew, Thailand, would prove to be no different.

Against Nietes, the Thai was fighting outside his country for the first time and his inexperience showed immediately. Stiff and tentative for the initial five rounds, he provided Nietes, 25, with what would prove to be an insurmountable lead. For his part, Nietes boxed well for the first half of the bout, forcing Pornsawan, 29, to chase him around the ring. Twenty seconds into round four, a short right to the chin dropped Pornsawan, but the plucky Thai popped up immediately, eager to show he would be there for the duration.

By the seventh round, the fight had turned from boxing match to ugly brawl. Pornsawan used his shoulders, elbows, and forearms to maul Nietes, 22-1-3 (13), into temporary compliance. Devoid of boxing finesse, Pornsawan, 20-1 (15), scratched and clawed his way back into the bout, until in round 10, after numerous warnings for low blows, referee Raul Caiz Jr. (USA) deducted a point, pushing victory further out of reach. Judge Levi Martinez (USA) scored it 115-111, Salven Lagumbay (Philippines) saw it 116-110, and Sawaeng Taweekoon (Thailand) scored it 114-113, all for Nietes.

Promoter: **Sammy G. Gello-ani**

(9-30-07)

Scott Mallon ■

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5974/09-07

New Faces

(Continued from Page 28)

"I felt good that CES wanted to deal with me, even though I've only been doing this since 2005," said Williams. "They keep me busy, get me fights on TV, and have me looking toward the future."

The knockout of Tinsley also gave Williams national attention when ESPN featured it as the network's "Play Of The Day."

For a preliminary fighter with only nine pro bouts to his credit, Williams had arrived. He would, however, arrive with a new team. Reid was out, and former WBA light heavyweight titlist Eddie Mustafa Muhammad and conditioning coach Axel Murillo were in.

"Jesse simply had too many other fighters, and we needed someone who was going to be there for me," said Williams. "Everything's been going great since then."

"Jesse's a wonderful trainer," said Mustafa Muhammad, who puts Williams through his paces at the Top Rank gym in Las Vegas, along with current WBC light heavyweight titlist Chad Dawson. "I just take what he's been taught to another level. Aaron has had a wonderful amateur career that's our foundation, and he understands what he has to do to become champion. I try to pass on the traits and techniques I've learned in my career. I'm not skipping anything, so Aaron's not going to miss anything. My job is to make Aaron the best fighter in the world."

Doljanin believes that Mustafa Muhammad and Williams have developed a bond that goes beyond the usual teacher-student relationship.

"They really hit it off well," said Doljanin. "There's a bit of a father/son thing going on there, which I think is good. Aaron's got a lot of respect for Eddie as a fighter and a person. They're both Muslims, and I think that offers a connecting point as well. I love watching them interact because when Eddie talks, it's like Aaron's looking at the Burning Bush. He hangs on every word and responds to what Eddie tells him."

If Mustafa Muhammad is telling Williams how vital a dynamic offense is,

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

Williams hones in on a stunned DeLeon Tinsley. Williams' spectacular second-round knockout was featured on ESPN's SportsCenter *as the network's "Play Of The Day." It also earned Williams a contract with promoter Jimmy Burchfield.*

it's working. But although he combines power in both hands with the ability to fight well on the inside, Williams does have a dangerous tendency to drop his hands and leave himself open to counters. Like a lot of fighters, Williams is the most vulnerable when gunning for the knockout, which was evident in the spectacular kayo of Tinsley. So regardless of the progress he's made, the patience issue lingers, regardless of Williams' insistence that he's got it under control.

Even so, it is not just people with a financial interest who think Williams has a lot to offer. Joe Byrd, father/trainer of former IBF heavyweight titleholder Chris Byrd, sees as much potential in Williams as Mustafa Muhammad does.

"This kid's something else," said Byrd, who got to know Williams when Aaron helped Chris prepare for his April 2007 fight with Paul Marinaccio. "He works hard and has all the right tools. He's still young, but already has all the makings of a future world champion. He's a tough, tough kid."

Despite the discipline Williams has acquired, he admits that his competitive nature sometimes takes off on its own.

"There was this one day when I was so focused on my bodywork that I walked into the gym and dropped every single sparring partner I had with a bodyshot," he said. "I don't know what happened. It was just one guy dropping after another."

Williams' bodypunching, specifically with the left hook, has become a major weapon in his arsenal. This was very apparent in his victory over Ryan Carrol, who entered the fight with a 6-0 (4) record, but folded in the first round when "Awesome Aaron" landed a crippling shot to the ribs.

"All I could think of is that this guy was undefeated like me," said Williams. "I knew he was going to be tough, but I just hit him with a shot that he didn't see. It was a surprise, but I had worked hard in the gym, sometimes until one or two o' clock in the morning."

As long as the 6'1" Williams stays dedicated to his craft and continues to work on his patience, the wins will keep coming and perhaps the hardware will follow.

"The cruiserweight division needs a guy like me with speed and a good defense," Williams said. "It needs a new, young thing to spark it up. I think that by the end of 2008, early-'09, I'll be in line for a major title. I want to do everything I can at cruiserweight first and then fight at heavyweight the rest of my career. That's what I really want—to be heavyweight champion." ■

Coyote Duran is a freelance writer from Illinois and regular contributor to doghouseboxing.com.

DON'T MISS

RING UPDATE WITH WILLIAM DETTLOFF

EVERY MONDAY ... EXCLUSIVELY ON: thering-online.com

Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, *The Ring*'s senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The dangers of boxing: "Long after you and I and everyone we know are long gone, men will still be fighting one another with their fists, and sometimes bad things will happen as a result. You may feel guilty about that fact if you wish. I will not."

Nicolay Valuev: "He's hairier than Robin Williams and facially looks an awful lot like Lurch from *The Addams Family*. In today's heavyweight division, that can get you a good long way."

The lack of a dominant heavyweight: "When a heavyweight champ is dominant, the only fun comes in wondering when someone will cut him down to size and how. We rush a guy to the top of the mountain just for the pleasure of watching him get knocked off."

Dettloff on thering-online.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

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Super Middleweight

Kelly Pavlik

Main Event 12 Rounds

Jermain Taylor

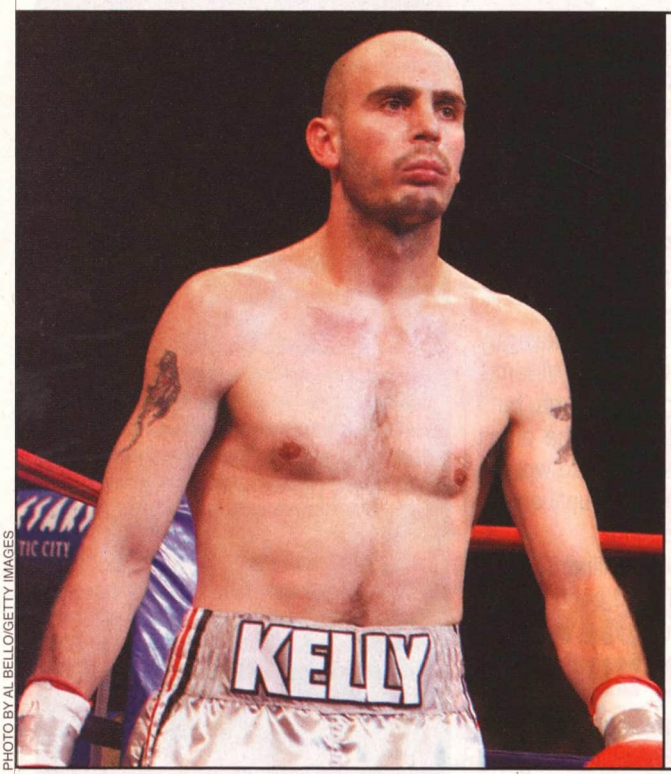


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

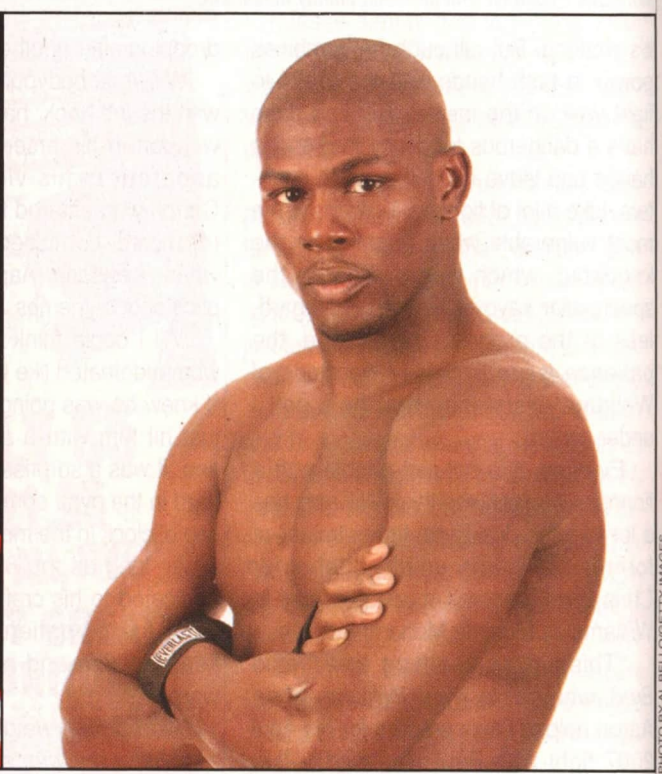


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Kelly Pavlik feels he made too many mistakes the first time he met Jermain Taylor, in September 2007. He says he won't repeat those same miscues when he faces Taylor again.

Taylor feels as if he let Pavlik off the hook in the second round, when he had "The Ghost" down and in serious survival mode. He believes if he gets another chance, he won't let Pavlik escape again.

Both fighters get a chance to prove their points February 16, at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas, when they meet at a catch-weight of 166 pounds. Pavlik's world middleweight championship belt, which he won by beating Taylor on a seventh-round stoppage in Atlantic City, will not be at stake.

What we saw the first time was a Fight of the Year candidate. Taylor had Pavlik down in the second round, and teetering on the brink of destruction. But Taylor could not finish the Youngstown, Ohio, native, and Pavlik climbed back into the fight.

Five rounds later, it was Pavlik hammering away at a defenseless Taylor, when referee Steve Smoger stopped the fight at the 2:14 mark.

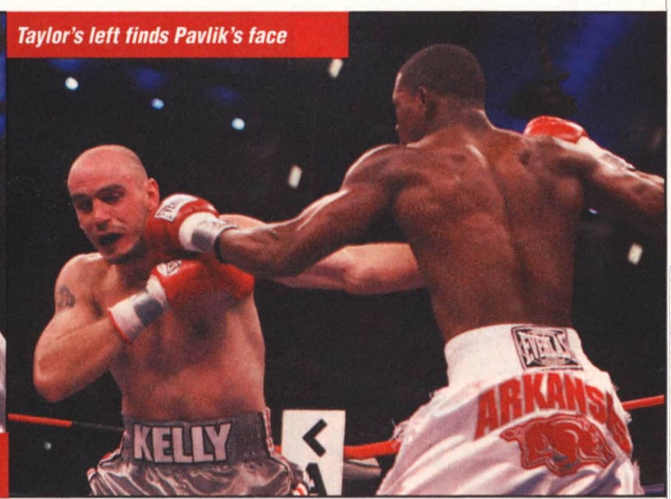
Kelly Pavlik

Jermain Taylor

Record and World Rating

Pavlik nails Taylor with a right

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES



Taylor's left finds Pavlik's face

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

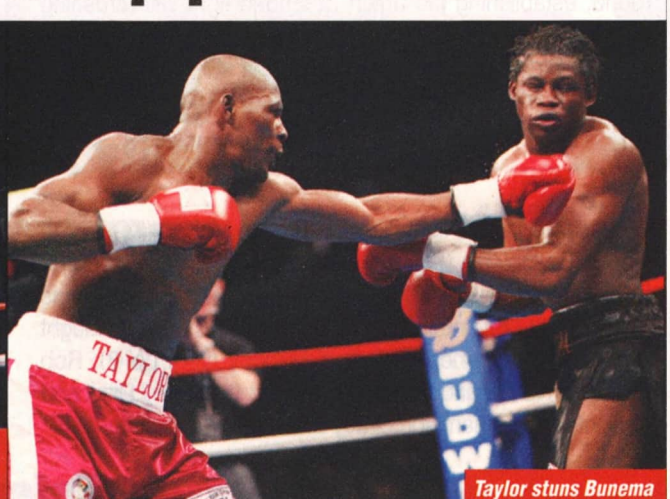
Is 32-0 with 29 knockouts ... Impressive 89-9 amateur record included winning '99 U.S. National Under-19 welterweight championship and bronze medal at 2000 U.S. National Championships ... Turned pro in June '00 after losing to Jermain Taylor in the Olympic Trials ... Won world middleweight championship in September '07... Recognized as world middleweight champion by THE RING.

Is 27-1-1 with 17 knockouts ... Bronze medalist at 2000 Olympics and 1998 Goodwill Games ... Captured pair of Golden Gloves and PAL championships ... Turned pro January 2001 ... Won world middleweight championship in July '05 ... Made four successful defenses at 160 ... Lost world middleweight championship in September '07 ... Is rated third at middleweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment

Pavlik turns Miranda's face into mush pie

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/RIGHT WIRE IMAGES



Taylor stuns Bunema

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Is 25 years old ... Stands 6'2" with a 75-inch reach ... Lanky build and long arms ... Tendency to bleed, though has not shown great propensity to cut or swell ... Excellent recuperative powers ... Liabilities are lack of hand and foot speed.

Is 29 years old ... Stands 6'1" with a 78-inch reach ... Has average hand speed ... Height gives instant advantage over most opponents ... Has had difficulty making the 160-pound limit, which could be the cause of his late-round fades ... Decent but not impervious chin.

Kelly Pavlik

Jermain Taylor

Best Weapons

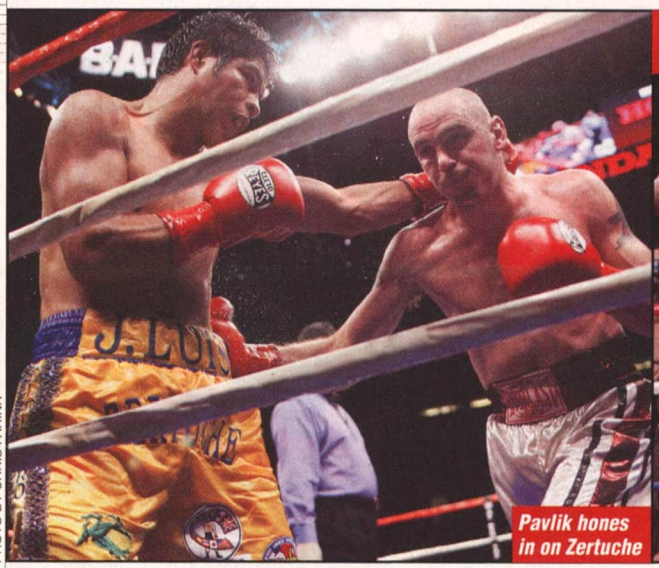


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Pavlik hones in on Zertuche

Taylor zeroes in on Spinks

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Thunderous right hand among the most dangerous punches in boxing today ... Also features outstanding left hook and accurate left jab ... Cool under fire ... Excellent finisher ... Self-confidence a major factor.

Relies on punching accuracy, behind strong left jab ... Very good upper-body strength ... Olympic experience ... Has respectable power in both hands, with overhand right most effective punch ... Strong starter.

Previous Fight

Recorded biggest victory of his career, stopping Taylor in the seventh round to capture the middleweight world championship ... Survived a major scare in the second when dropped by a Taylor right ... Rallied back to win the third round, establishing jab again ... Ended fight with crushing right in the seventh that crumbled Taylor in the corner ... Referee Steve Smoger called a halt over still-dazed Taylor at the 2:14 mark.

Started well and appeared poised to finish Pavlik in the second round when he floored challenger with a right to the chin ... Had Pavlik teetering on shaky legs the remainder of the round, but could not finish him off ... Started to take considerable punishment in the fourth ... Succumbed in the seventh under a torrent of right hands ... Was comfortably ahead at the time of stoppage, 58-55 (twice) and 59-54.

Quality of Opposition

Has faced some light hitters in Bronco McKart (KO 6) and Dorian Beaupierre (KO 2) ... Tangled with heavy hitters in Edison Miranda (KO 7), Lenord Pierre (KO 4), Jose Luis Zertuche (KO 8), and Fulgencio Zuniga (KO 9) ... Also fought a host of journeymen, including Anthony Ivory (W 8), Rob Bleakley (KO 2), and Eduardo Gutierrez (KO 2) ... Disposed of *Contender 2* champion Grady Brewer in two rounds.

Pair of victories over Bernard Hopkins (W 12, W 12) top resume ... Labored to beat undersized Kassim Ouma (W 12) and Cory Spinks (W 12) ... Also struggled against Winky Wright (D 12) ... Triumphed over collection of ex-titleholders and journeymen on the way up, including, Raul Marquez (KO 9), William Joppy (W 12), Daniel Edouard (KO 3), Marcos Primera (KO 5), and Alex Bunema (KO 7)

Defense

Power and busy offense often discourages foes from stepping inside or setting up ... Has solid defensive skills when in boxer mode despite average mobility ... Can leave himself open to right hands when throwing left jab ... Intelligently clutches when hurt.

Doesn't use his rangy jab as much as he should to keep opponents off-balance ... Has the legs to quickly move out of opponent's striking distance ... Tendency to get caught in corners and against the ropes, which proved costly against both Wright and Pavlik.

Kelly Pavlik

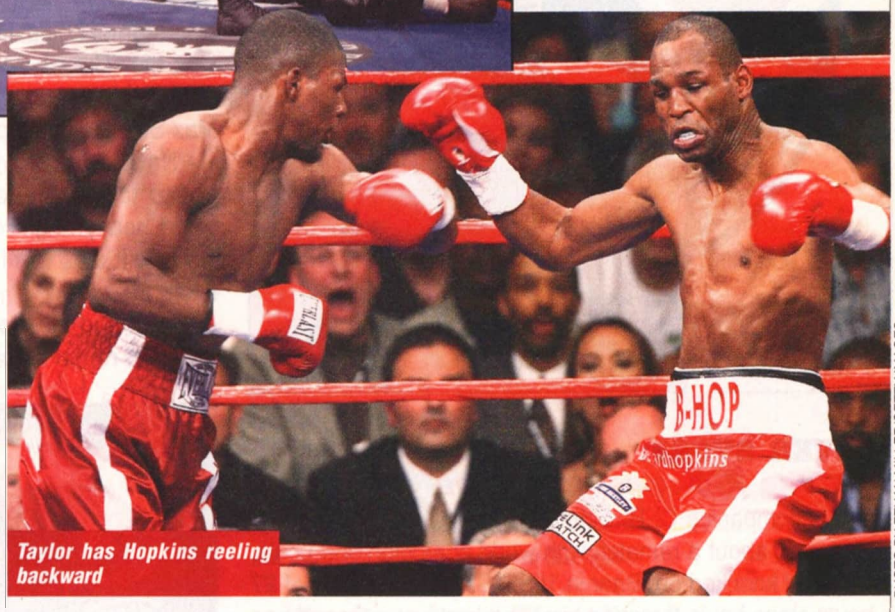
Jermain Taylor

Style

Pavlik finishes off Miranda

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Pressuring, straight-ahead approach that often has opposing fighters backing up ... Aggressive, patient powerpuncher who stalks opponents ... Technically sound ... Will use shoulders and elbows for inside positioning where he can muscle fighters who can't match his strength.



Taylor has Hopkins reeling backward

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Content to box and move, after beginning career with aggressive, attacking style ... Methodical approach that now appears to be regressing with each step up in competition ... Looked very unsure of himself under Steward's tutelage ... Cautious finisher when he has foe in trouble.

The Questions

Was the first fight a fluke? Can he avoid Taylor's overhand right? Will fighting at a heavier weight prove a disadvantage? Can he finish Taylor sooner in the rematch?

Can he overcome the psychological trauma of being knocked out? Can he find an answer for Pavlik's double jab? Did making the 160-pound middleweight limit hurt his effectiveness in the first fight? Will new trainer remedy his faults?

The Outcome

Pavlik's confidence will show early, as he imposes his will in the first few rounds. Taylor will try his best to stave off Pavlik's charges, but The Ghost will overwhelm Taylor's fragile psyche and finish the job sooner than the first time, stopping Taylor in the fifth round.

June 1938

COVER STORY: "Max Baer Has His Eye On The Heavyweight Crown" is the headline that accompanies C. R. Schaare's illustration of Baer daydreaming about a rematch with world champion Joe Louis, who had knocked out Baer in 1935. Baer had won 25 of 27 bouts since Louis thrashed him, and had just avenged one of those two defeats by outpointing Tommy Farr. The fact that Baer had floored Farr twice, when Louis had been unable to deck the Welshman in winning a 15-round decision the previous year, had some believing that "The Livermore Larruper" was ready to regain the crown.

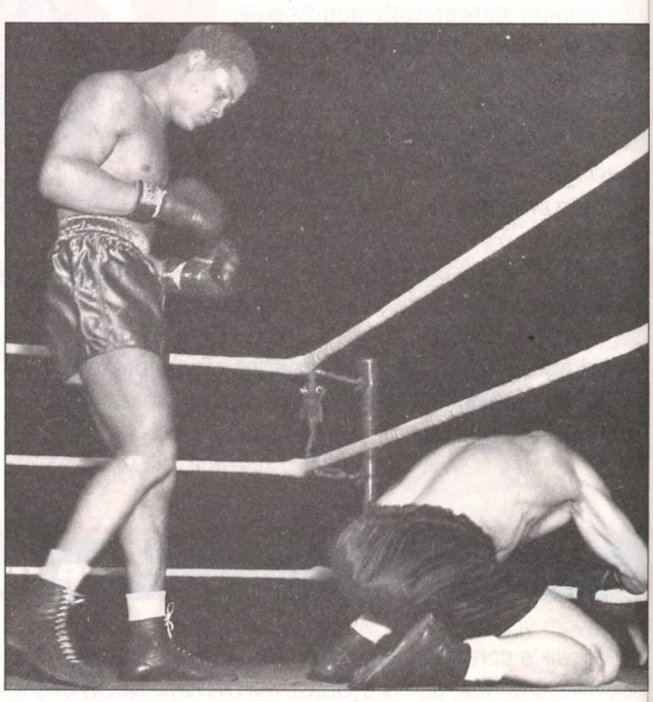
"One month ago, the mention of Max Baer as a probable participant in a world's heavyweight contest next summer would have met with little consideration from boxing followers," wrote Ted Carroll. "Now, however, the one-time playboy king of the heavies, since reformed by the refining influences of matrimony and fatherhood, stands out as the logical foe for the winner of the coming Louis-Schmeling imbroglio in June."

As things turned out, Baer's chance of another crack at Louis was ruined when he twice stopped by Lou Nova, once in 1939 and then again in '41.

"And Now For Herr Max" is Nat Fleischer's coverage of Louis' fifth-round kayo of Harry Thomas, which was the "Brown Bomber's" third successful title defense and final tuneup prior to his much-anticipated rematch with Max Schmeling, who had handed Louis his lone defeat.

"Knocked out twice in one fight—that was what happened to Harry Thomas when he fought Joe Louis in a world heavyweight championship at Chicago Stadium on April 1. It was April Fool's Day in more ways than one," wrote Fleischer.

Louis and most onlookers thought the fight was over in the third round when a series of hard shots had Thomas

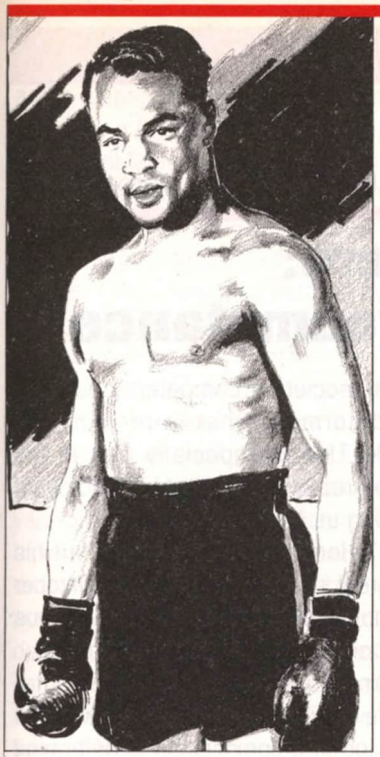


Louis finishes Thomas (again) in the fifth round

World Champions

(For the period ended April 10, 1938)

Heavyweight: Joe Louis
Light Heavyweight: John Henry Lewis
Middleweight: Freddy Steele
Welterweight: Barney Ross
Lightweight: Lou Ambers
Featherweight: Henry Armstrong
Bantamweight: Sixto Escobar
Flyweight: Benny Lynch



Armstrong fought for free to aid fight judge's family

out on his feet. The challenger turned his back on Louis and walked toward his corner with 12 seconds remaining in the round. But instead of stopping the fight, referee Dave Miller, after consulting with the commission, allowed the bout to continue. To his credit, Thomas fought back and landed some good punches of his own in the fourth and fifth rounds, but was floored once in the fourth and three more times in the fifth, finally succumbing at the 2:50 mark.

"Joe's hitting was, as usual, all that could be desired. If he connects, he jars his adversary from head to heels," wrote Fleischer. "Schmeling won't be the exception."

Fleischer was certainly correct in his analysis: Louis knocked out his German rival in the first round.

"They Discovered They Were Good" is illustrator/writer Robert Edgren's theme piece about how certain fighters allegedly found out they had a knack for fisticuffs. According to Edgren, a 14-year-old Bob Fitzsimmons turned tiger when a preacher's son was unfairly awarded the prayer book prize in a scripture-memorizing contest.

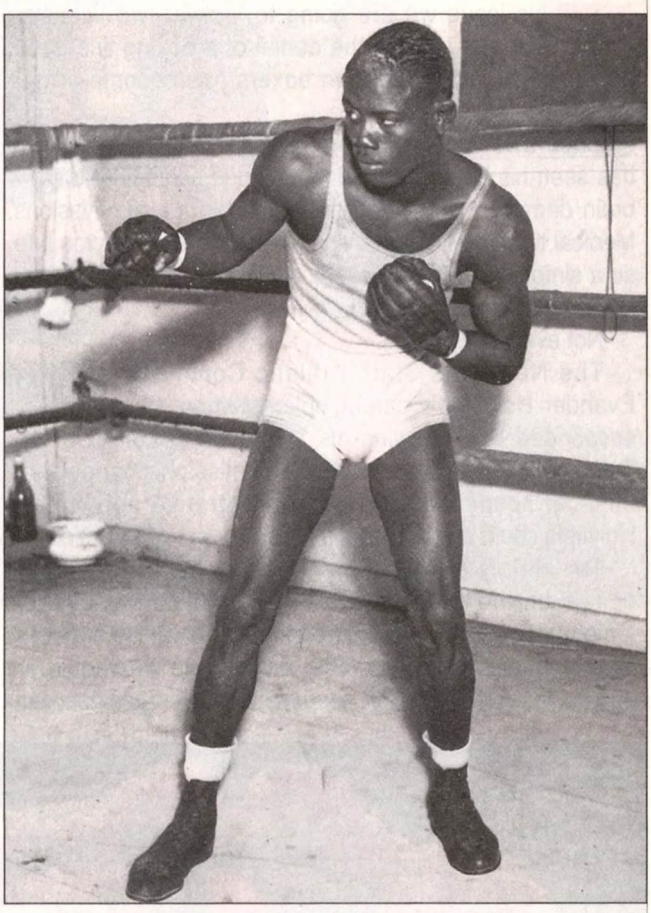
"The preacher's son plopped the book down, squared up, and received a haymaker on this chin. Down he went—for the count. And away fled Fitzsimmons, prayer book under his arm."

Edgren also spins similar yarns about Tommy Burns, Mickey Walker, Battling Nelson, Bob Armstrong, Pedlar Palmer, and Jackie Fields.

"Nat Fleischer Says" includes the opinion that two British fighters, middleweight/light heavyweight contender Jock McAvoy and world flyweight champion Benny Lynch, should come to the United States to fight. McAvoy, whose previous U.S. campaign ended with a decision loss to light heavyweight champion John Henry Lewis in 1936, stayed in the U.K., as did Lynch, a helpless alcoholic who retired at the end of the year.

"Broadcast From New York" by Eddie Borden is peppered with numerous Big Apple happenings, including a charity appearance by featherweight champion Henry Armstrong to raise money for the family of deceased fight judge Charles Lynch. Armstrong, who stopped Lew Feldman in the fifth round, donated his services, which resulted in $4,500 being handed over to Lynch's family.

Borden also gives favorable mentions to Gus Lesnevich, who decisioned Lou Brouillard in his New York City debut, and Jackie "Kid" Berg, who tallied his fifth straight victory of the year with an eight-round decision over Johnny Horstman.



Kid Chocolate wins his second-to-last fight

"In Syracuse Rings" by Billy Shaw features Walter Woods' third-round knockout of local middleweight Ralph DeJohn in what Shaw called "the most amazing upset in local fistic history during the past 10 years."

"Boxing In Cuba" by Milt Baron highlights Kid Chocolate's 10-round decision over Fillio Echevarria at the Polar Stadium in Havana, which drew a healthy gate of $15,000.

"Chocolate appeared in tip-top shape, went through his assignment like a master, and all through the 10 rounds showed that he is still in the running for a crack at the title," wrote Baron.

Despite the form he displayed against Echevarria, Chocolate had just one more fight, a 10-round draw with Nicky Jerome, and retired. ■

The Fight Doctor

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Evander Holyfield And Edwin Valero: Damaged Goods Or Victims Of Circumstance?

This issue we are going to look at two licensing disputes, where the denial of a boxing license to a pair of well-known boxers has become a matter of debate.

Case One: The distinction between an older fighter who has seen his best days and one who is beginning to show brain damage is often incomprehensible for commissions. Medical testing will not provide an answer until it is too late, so a simpler route is to license all fighters until they can no longer sell tickets.

Not everyone agrees.

The New York State Athletic Commission limited Evander Holyfield's career options when they medically suspended him following his 2004 loss to Larry Donald. Following legal pressure, the commission changed the medical suspension to an administrative one, where Holyfield could compete everywhere except in New York.

THE RING's senior writer, William Dettloff, recently opined on thering-online.com that regulators should be lenient to the former heavyweight champion. He stated, "I also maintain that as a matter of principle we should err on the side of personal freedom when it's a close call, recognizing that in a free society a competent adult has the inherent right to determine what is for him and acceptable level of risk. This is especially true in the case of Holyfield, whose great crime is that he's not what he used to be. Who among us is?"

Holyfield's 42-9-2 (27) looks good on paper, but his recent record tells a different story. In fact, with an October 13 loss to Sultan Ibragimov in Moscow, some would argue Holyfield hasn't looked good in more than seven years.

I understand Bill's point, but a boxing license is not a *right*; it is a *privilege*. Life would be simpler if we were all Libertarians, but it is the job of a commission to determine a fighter's fitness to box. Unfortunately, most fail to do their jobs. They run with their tails between their legs when a high-profile fighter and his posse of attorneys approach. Or, they become ostriches when a big promoter comes around with a way to generate tax revenue.

Still, poor or diminishing skill is traditionally not a medical issue. It becomes arguable and difficult to defend in court when one bases licensing solely on medical exams. But diminished skill is often a harbinger of brain damage. Who is to say Meldrick Taylor, Muhammad Ali, or Terry Norris would not be as ill if they had been suspended earlier.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Holyfield absorbs a left during loss to Ibragimov

Those close to the sport know the distinction between a fighter who has lost his legs and one who is becoming punch drunk. These symptoms can be identified and objectively followed by comparing a boxer's performance with changes in his speech pattern, cognitive functioning (memory, concentration, etc.), balance, and coordination. There exist specially trained neurologists and neuropsychologists that can quantify these entities over time. These criteria will enable commissions to make the right decision. Sadly, few have the fortitude to do so, so the status quo apathetically continues. There are, however, some exceptions.

When asked if he would license Holyfield, Pennsylvania's executive director, Greg Sirb, said he believes a commission must look at three things: 1) age, 2) medical tests, 3) past record

and experience. He admits that no commission can deny a fighter a license solely based on age, but it must factor into the decision.

"The general train of thought I have used, and used in front of some tough court judges when boxers have appealed the decision, is two prongs: One, recognize that the boxer is in great shape for a 40-year-old man, but he will not be competing against another 35 to 40-year-old man. He will be going against a younger athlete who is quicker and punches harder. This is not like tennis or golf where you have a senior league. Two, what is the point of some 40 to 45-year-old boxer wanting a license? Does he/she have any realistic chance of being a champion or even making a living doing this? I always say I am not denying your right to earn a living. I am denying your right to compete as a boxer. You can earn a living many other ways."

"When considering boxers and their qualifications, I look at performance over the past two years, who they fought and what they did," said Bernie Profato, Ohio executive director. "I would deny Holyfield a license."

Profato's outspoken concern is another reason boxers with a poor performance or medical issues have chosen neighboring states to gain a license. Joe Mesi, who suffered two cerebral hemorrhages in 2004, recently decided to skip applying in Ohio.

PHOTO BY TOSHIFUMI KITAMURA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Valero has 22 straight knockouts and a hole in his skull

"At the end of the day, as a commissioner, you have to look yourself in the mirror after every fight and say to yourself, *Was that boxer medically, physically, and experienced enough to compete*?" said Sirb. "If you can answer yes to these three points, then if a boxer is hurt, at least your conscience is clear."

Who couldn't agree with that philosophy?

Case two: WBA super featherweight titleholder Edwin Valero has never fought on American television. Even so, the 26-year-old Venezuelan is well known throughout the boxing world as a kayo artist, winning 22 straight fights via knockout. With his skill and accomplishments, why should concerns exist about Valero's brain? Why does New York have this young man on indefinite medical suspension? Moreover, are U.S. boxing regulators being overprotective and stifling his chances of true international success?

Valero's brain irregularity stems from a motorcycle accident at age 20 where he sustained a skull fracture and an epidural hematoma. An epidural hematoma is arterial bleeding localized between the skull and leather covering of the brain (called the dura). Brain artery hemorrhages are more serious and rapid than those resulting from veins beneath the dura (subdural hematomas). The latter is the typical death-producing boxing injury.

In addition to removing the blood clot, which should be reason enough for him to never fight again, Valero's surgeon performed a craniectomy. This procedure involves a piece of skull bone being removed to gain access to the brain and alleviate pressure beneath that could result in brain cell death. The bone pieces are not replaced. A metal plate is often inserted, but this was reportedly not done in Valero's case.

How can a fighter be cleared to fight with a piece of skull missing?

One might assume that if a fighter is as good as Valero, his medical deficiencies are a non-issue. But no one can predict where on the head a fighter is hit or where his head hits the canvas when knocked down. The skull supports the structures of the face, protects the brain from injury, and absorbs much of the force of a punch. Every fighter should not only compete with a healthy brain, but with an intact skull.

Although Valero's medical suspension does not exist outside the United States, the complete disregard by the WBA, among others, for his risks are barbaric.

Greg Sirb noted, "If Valero wants to box legally in the United States, he must appeal to the New York commission and show that the medical condition [that led to his suspension] is no longer present."

Somehow, that doesn't seem likely. ■

By Jim Bagg

Taylor-ed To Suit Pavlik

The Baggmeister had a friend growing up by the name of Dewey Goode. Everybody had a friend like Dewey—he was that guy who always followed the Golden Rule and then some, treating others with even more decency than he could ever imagine being treated with himself. There was the time Dewey invited Jed, the complete social outcast who nobody ever invited to anything, to play stickball with us, and we found out why Jed had no friends when he spazzed out, started a fight, and gave Dewey a bloody nose. There was the time in ninth grade when Dewey offered to help Janice, the pretty blonde with no personality, with her math homework, and Janice used and abused poor Dewey, leveraging her good looks to get him to do her work while she went out with her friends. And there was the time Dewey pulled his car over to help a stranger fixing a flat tire, and after the new tire was on, the guy accidentally ran over Dewey's foot as he pulled away. Last time the Baggalama saw the Dewmeister, he was still walking with a limp.

Dewey always acted with the best of intentions. And more often than not, he would have been better served just being a selfish jerk.

Which brings the Baggomatic to Jermain Taylor.

It's impossible to deny that "Bad Intentions" is a better nickname for a fighter than "Good Intentions." But for Taylor, that Bad Intentions tag just never quite fit right. It was like trying to stuff Nicolay Valuev into Ivan Calderon's underwear. For Taylor, the name Good Intentions is infinitely more accurate. Maybe it wouldn't scare anyone, but it would tell his story honestly: He shies away from no chal-

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Why is Taylor so anxious for another dose of Pavlik?

PHOTO BY JEFF JULIAN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Taylor's good intentions could very well turn bad

lenge, he tries to give the fans the fights they want, and he strives to be a respectable and respected fighter.

It was with nothing but the best intentions that Taylor declared in October that he would be exercising the immediate rematch clause in the contract from his title loss to Kelly Pavlik. The Baggareeno tips his hat to Taylor for his courage, for his interest in his own legacy, for thinking like a fighter and not a businessman. But it's impossible for Bagger Vance not to think of good ol' Dewey here. Taylor's doing the right thing as far as the sport of boxing is concerned, but the Baggtastic has to wonder if, in the process, he's shooting himself in the foot (or sticking his foot under the wheel of a Chevy).

Look at Taylor's middleweight title reign: an immediate rematch with Bernard Hopkins (not that Taylor had a choice there, but you know he would have given the ex-champ a shot whether contractually obligated or not); a defense against Winky Wright, the best and trickiest challenger available; for an "easy" fight, Kassim Ouma, who we all forget was regarded by many as the most talented 154-pounder at the time; Cory Spinks, on paper the softest defense of the reign, but a shifty southpaw who could make any fight as ugly as Bette Davis; and then Pavlik, the hardest-punching middleweight since Gerald McClellan.

And now here goes the Little Rock fighter, just a few weeks after getting more than a little rocked by Pavlik in the seventh round, deciding he wants to again fight The Ghost with the most. Taylor, right now, is a car that has so many dashboard lights on, you're not sure what to repair first—but you know you need to bring him into the shop before he drives another mile. First losses are never easy. First losses *by knockout* for a fighter caught between several different styles and struggling with confidence issues scream, "Take a break and rebuild." Taylor doesn't just need an oil change and then you send him right back out on the road; he needs extensive engine work, and maybe some body work too. And yet he's decided he wants to race the Indy 500 in his condition. That's wonderfully brave and noble. And it's a great way to suffer two losses inside five months.

The Baggzodiac knows what Taylor's supporters are going to say: He was one punch away from scoring an easy second-round knockout over Pavlik, so it's perfectly

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE

The Baggareeno has some sage advise for Duddy

reasonable to believe he can get the job done in the rematch. The thing is, maybe we wouldn't have realized it, but if the result had been Taylor KO 2 Pavlik, it would have been a total fluke, along the lines of "Rahman KO 5 Lewis." Pavlik dropped his hands, he got cocky and stupid, and Taylor nearly made him pay. *Nearly.* Even with that golden opportunity, Taylor came up short, and frankly, it's hard to envision Pavlik allowing him another opportunity half as golden.

If Taylor can't make 160 pounds anymore, that's fine; he can move up to 168—a division that'll be wide open as soon as Joe Calzaghe announces he's moving up to light heavyweight. Taylor should be taking an easy comeback fight against a competent, right-handed super middle without a huge punch (like Rubin Williams or Yusaf Mack), and if that goes well, maybe he can challenge a guy like Lucian Bute for a belt, or make a fun TV fight against one-dimensional *Contender* champ Sakio Bika (or even runner-up Jaidon Codrington). A fight with Olympic teammate Jeff Lacy would be a big HBO bout. The point is, Taylor has plenty of options besides Pavlik, and he really could use a get-well fight (or two) after the endless grind of difficult bouts over the last couple of years. Sometimes, you just have to be smart and put the bravado on hold.

Which is also something John Duddy and his people ought to think about. If the limited Irishman (when you go to hell and back with Yory Boy Campas at this point in his career, I'm sorry, but you're limited) just sits tight and keeps padding his record, he'll get big money to challenge Pavlik for the middleweight championship sometime in '08. But Duddy, for whatever reason, has signed to fight Howard Eastman (the fight will in fact have taken place by the time you read this) and, win or lose, that's a pointless risk. You don't need to go all Gerry Cooney and pick up a coating of rust as your title shot nears, but you may as well keep busy against lesser fighters who don't pose a threat to your unbeaten record.

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

Bika:* The Contender's *best to date

It's kind of ironic: The Big Bagg Wolf is calling Taylor dumb for fighting Pavlik, and calling Duddy a dunce for risking *not* fighting Pavlik. It sounds like some kind of hypocrisy, but in fact, it's just two fighters in different places, where a beatdown from Pavlik means different things.

In his everyday life, the Bagghetti & Meatballs simply likes to ask himself, "What would Dewey do?", and then he does the opposite. Jermain Taylor prefers to do just what Dewey would do. Good for him as a person. Bad for him as a fighter.

Reality Check, Baggman-Style ... As regular readers of "Hitting On The Break" know, the Baggtometrist is not a fan of reality TV, and he watches as little of *The Contender* as he can possibly get away with. But he has nothing against watching *Contender* fighters in actual fights, so he checked out the ESPN card in October featuring Alfonso Gomez vs. Ben Tackie and Sergio Mora vs. Elvin Ayala, and he came to the following conclusions: Arturo Gatti must be the washed-uppedist fighter of all-time, and Peter Manfredo must just plain suck.

Okay, maybe that's a little harsh, but both Gomez and Mora gave disappointing performances (though it's worth mentioning that both were enjoyable to watch). Mora had to rally to eke out a draw against a guy who probably isn't even a top-50 middleweight, and while some have heaped praise upon Gomez for defeating a sturdy veteran in Tackie, let us remember that the 34-year-old Ghanaian hasn't beaten so much as a fringe contender in more than five years and did his best work at lightweight and junior welter before fighting Gomez at 148 pounds. If Gomez really was a "contender," he would have outboxed Benny Leadfoot every second of every round, instead of winning by just two points, as he did on Judge Baggner's scorecard.

Sure, a win is a win is a win, and a draw is, well, not a loss. But Gomez and Mora made one thing abundantly clear in these bouts: Sakio Bika is the pound-for-pound best fighter to come out of *The Contender.*

And The Stingray Goes To ... Miguel Munguia, who, despite having way too many consecutive vowels in his name, won one for "opponents" everywhere on November 2 when he shocked previously unbeaten Jose "Pit Bull" Diaz, the baby brother of Juan "Baby Bull" Diaz. (How is the baby brother of "Baby Bull"

a "Pit Bull"? Shouldn't he be "Baby Baby Bull"? Or "Newborn Bull"?)

Munguia, who entered the fight with a going-nowhere-fast record of 15-7-1 (13), broke Diaz' jaw in the first round and outworked him for 10 rounds on his way to a close, unanimous decision. To Diaz' credit, he toughed out the jaw injury (which shortly after the fight required pin and screw insertions, a procedure that sounds about as pleasant as playing Twister with the Baggstrocity's second mother-in-law) and didn't even cry afterward, like the Baby Bull might have. As for Munguia, perhaps he'll cry tears of joy when he finds out he's a Stingray winner. Or maybe he'll cry because his last name looks like some kind of crotch condition requiring a doctor's attention.

Anyway, enjoy the Stingray, Miguel. And put some ointment on that munguia. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com.

The Monthly Mailbagg

As promised, the Bagginator is letting this column sink several feet down into a bog of mediocrity by letting you, the common folk, contribute to it with your e-mails. In truth, if the first month's worth of e-mails are any indication, "mediocrity" is far too kind a word. Some of you people wouldn't even be qualified to write about boxing on the Internet.

Hi Baggmeister,

I saw your e-mail address, and couldn't resist. I wanted to thank you for adding a little more intensity to The Ring. You keep spouting your opinion and I will keep reading.

Russell Schultz

Russell,

Let me know if you should one day discover you actually have something to say. Why send an e-mail that says absolutely nothing? And since the Baggmatism knows that you "will keep reading" the opinions he spouts, how's this for an opinion: Russell, you are one boring human.

Hey, Bagman,

Awesome job of telling it how it is. "Real Fighters Don't Dance" and "Not Jones-ing Anymore" (January 2008) are right on the money. Your unbiased opinion is one of the main reasons I read The Ring magazine. SCREW all the crybabies and keep up the good work.

After watching HBO's telecast of Joe Calzaghe further improving his record and reputation as the true top dog in the 168-pound division, I found it troubling that names kicked around by HBO as possible opponents were B-Hop at 175, Kelly Pavlik (a middleweight), and the only super middle mentioned was Lucian Bute, who's an overrated clubfighter. What are your thoughts on a fight between undefeated Englishman Carl Froch and undefeated Welsh/English/Italian Calzaghe? Nobody mentioned Froch as even a possible opponent for Kessler. Your thoughts on Carl Froch please.

Aaron Ramirez

Aaron,

Four words for you: Who gives a Froch?

Come on, Calzaghe has bigger fish-n-chips to fry than an English fighter nobody west of the Atlantic knows anything about. Joltin' Joe has earned the right to fight only big-money fights from here on out, and that means Hopkins and Pavlik—not Froch, and not even Bute (who, for a "clubfighter," has proven an awful lot more than Froch so far). With all due respect to Froch, Bute, Allen Green, etc., Calzaghe has cleaned out the super middleweight division. He has nothing left to prove there. It's time to face legitimate world champions from neighboring divisions, or huge-name superstars looking for the ultimate test (not that Oscar De La Hoya, Roy Jones, or Felix Trinidad are going to want to go anywhere near Calzaghe).

You want to see Kessler vs. Froch, that's fine. But Froch is worth Calzaghe's time the same way this Mailbagg was worth the Baggnificent One's time. Let's hope you wannabes do better next month.

PHOTO BY CHRIS ROYLE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Froch stops Robin Reid, but has yet to impress Bagg

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Mean-Spirited And Untrue

I understand the need for columnists to be provocative with their commentary. Ivan Goldman, however, went over the line with his referring to Hidalgo, Texas, as a "little flyspeck of a town on the dirt poor Tex-Mex border" ("Digging Deep," January 2008). Not only was the comment mean-spirited, it was flat out untrue.

Hidalgo is in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas and is part of the vast socio-economic zone that begins in Mission and runs south and east down to Brownsville and South Padre Island. We support several pro sports teams, including arena football, developmental basketball, hockey, and minor league baseball. Most importantly, boxing is thriving down here. Top Rank has sold out the Dodge Arena in Hidalgo with cards that featured Jhonny Gonzalez and Jorge Arce. That promoter Gary Shaw couldn't get more than a few thousand fans into the arena for the Israel Vazquez-Rafael Marquez rematch is inexplicable. Perhaps Goldman should look into what promoter Shaw did wrong. There must be a reason some of the most rabid boxing fans in the country would stay home.

CALIXTO GONZALEZ
Edinburg, TX

Barrera's Smartest Move

I know it was a big letdown that Marco Antonio Barrera didn't put on a blood-and-guts display like we were all expecting in his rematch with Manny Pacquiao. Believe me, I was very upset. Hell, I named my son after him. But if you think about it, you can't really blame Barrera for the way he fought. He's given us so many all-out brawls that maybe he was thinking, *Hey, I want to leave the game and still have my wits about me.*

In boxing you never know when your breaking point will come. I've always praised Barrera for being a very intelligent fighter. Perhaps this was the smartest move he's ever made in the ring, especially against a man-eater like Pacquiao.

AMOS REYNA
Crosbyton, TX

Let's Fill The Vacancy

If Oscar De La Hoya and Bob Arum really want to save boxing, their first priority should be making the Manny Pacquiao-Juan Manuel Marquez rematch. This is a fight the real boxing fans have been talking about and waiting for. The ugliest thing for us to see in THE RING rankings is "title vacant." Forget all the politics and pay these fighters what they deserve. Give this fight the same publicity as the

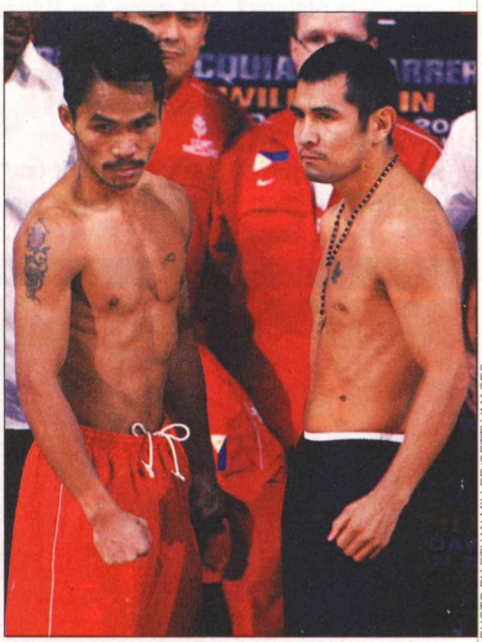


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Manny Pacquiao and Marco Antonio Barrera pose after making weight for their October 2007 rematch, which Pacquiao won via unanimous decision. Reader Amos Reyna, a long-time Barrera fan, thinks the Mexican icon was smart not to mix it up with "Pac-Man," especially as it was Barrera's final fight.

Mayweather-De La Hoya fight, and Pacquiao and Marquez are sure to deliver. This match will attract new fans and reward the old ones.

VICTOR RIVERO
Vicrivero22@yahoo.com

Bagg, Pro And Con

Oh joy, the planets have aligned and the world once more makes sense. It's been a long time coming, but the Jim Bagg column has gone mainstream. As it becomes more and more difficult to buy American boxing magazines in England, other than THE RING, I thought that the Baggalangadingdong was lost forever. But like a bad rash that won't go away, he's back. The Baggman is one of the most insightful and funny boxing journalists in the game and deserves to be in "The Bible of Boxing." Here's looking forward to THE RING even more than usual.

LEONARD THEOBALDS
Essex, England

If I try to read any more of that Bagg-headed Baggarts Baggtifications, I'm going to need a barf Bagg.

MARC BAGGSTEIN
Los Angeles, CA

Classic Trilogy In The Making

I read "Vazquez Stops Marquez To Set Up Rubber Match: Gatti-Ward ... But At A Higher Level" (December 2007) by Don Stewart, which was definitely a good article. The fight was spectacular, and I think it is the leading candidate for Fight of the Year. They both went at it hard and both scored with incredible powershots. I also think that having Rudy Perez in his corner significantly improved Vazquez' chances of winning because I think Perez is a much better trainer than Freddie Roach (no offense). All the hard work and dedication has finally paid off for the incredibly strong Vazquez, and I think that he will knock out Marquez again in the rubber match.

ISAAH GRIGG
Superluigi2822@msn.con

Calzaghe Proves Himself Again

Just watched the long-awaited Joe Calzaghe-Mikkel Kessler fight and was very impressed with the controlled fury these guys put forth. This is what boxing is all about. Calzaghe proved once again why he belongs in the pound-for-pound top 10, maybe as high as number five.

ALEX CALDERON
Los Angeles, CA

An Uncomfortable Truth

It just doesn't seem right that after such an outrageous decision in the Joel Casamayor-Jose Armando Santa Cruz fight that Casamayor is still THE RING magazine lightweight champion. The fight was not even close! It was not Santa Cruz' fault that completely incompetent judges were used. I know THE RING only has three rules by which a champion can lose the belt, but what about considering two other possibilities: When a RING champion does not defend his belt within a 12-month period and when a champion retains the title with a totally absurd decision, such as the Casamayor-Santa Cruz fight.

DARIN C. UHRICH
Casa Grande, AZ

Editor's note: We feel your pain, Darin. Casamayor won just two rounds on THE RING scorecard, so we are in total agreement regarding the atrocious verdict. But THE RING cannot change a decision, and to ignore the fact that Casamayor was the "official" winner would be just as foolish as the decision itself. Two wrongs don't make a right. Moreover, if a RING champion goes more than 12 months without making a defense, is not injured, and doesn't have a defense scheduled, we will contact him to ascertain his intentions. If, at that time, the champion tells us he does not plan to defend, THE RING will ask him to voluntarily relinquish the title. ■

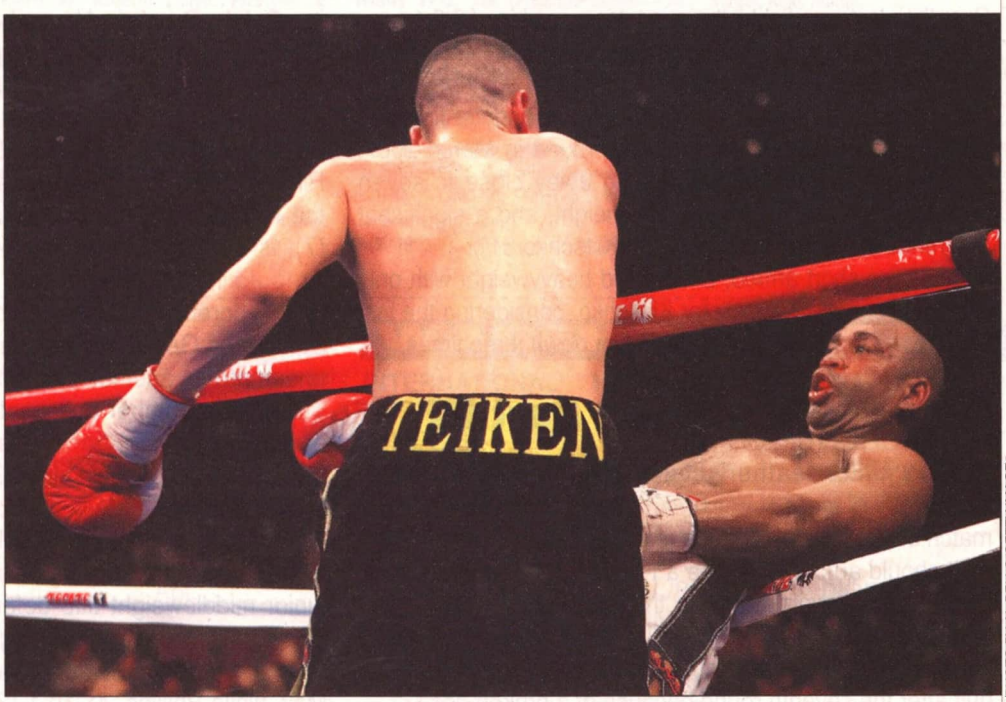


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Joel Casamayor sways between the ropes in an effort to avoid Jose Santa Cruz' attack. Like many readers, Darin C. Uhrich was outraged by the decision that allowed Casamayor to retain the world lightweight title and wants THE RING to strip the Cuban.

By Joe Santoliquito

Klitschko-Ibragimov Looks Good—On Paper

Whenever **Wladimir Klitschko** speaks about the current state of the heavyweight division, he talks of one day being recognized as the undisputed world heavyweight champion. THE RING currently ranks the IFB titleholder number one, but the spot Klitschko craves—world champion—is conspicuously vacant.

In the meantime, Klitschko, 49-3 (44), is willing to take a test, or so it appears, on February 23, at Madison Square Garden, when he will meet **Sultan Ibragimov**, rated sixth by THE RING. The fight will be shown on subscription HBO.

Ibragimov, 22-0-1 (17), is coming off the two most important victories of his career, decisions over tarnished veterans **Shannon Briggs** and **Evander Holyfield**.

You can scoff all you want about Briggs and Holyfield, but lately Klitschko hasn't faced much better. In fact, it's safe to say Klitschko hasn't faced anyone competitive in more than two years, since he came off the canvas three times to decision **Samuel Peter** in September 2005. Since then, "Dr. Steelhammer" has played it safe, mowing down **Chris Byrd**, **Calvin Brock**, **Ray Austin**, and a hollow **Lamon Brewster**.

Granted, Klitschko stopped them all, and it's also fair to say that the four were once viable heavyweights. But not anymore. Over their last nine fights, the quartet is a combined 2-6-1.

Though Ibragimov is undefeated, Klitschko may still be getting a relatively soft touch in the Russian southpaw, who has stopped only one of his last four opponents, finishing the unimposing **Javier Mora** in one round in March 2007. Moreover, Ibragimov will be giving away close to seven inches (6' to Klitschko's 6'6½") in height, and a significant difference in reach (Ibragimov 76"; Klitschko 81").

Facing a short-armed, undersized heavyweight with only a modest punch fits nicely for Klitschko, considering the last puncher he encountered knocked him down three times.

Vazquez-Marquez, Part III

RING junior featherweight world champion **Israel Vazquez** will meet **Rafael Marquez** in a March 1 rubber match on Showtime, at a venue to be determined.

It should automatically be a Fight of the Year candidate, if the first two wars between this combustible pair is any indication. Marquez, 37-4 (33), survived a third-round knockdown in the first fight, in March '07, before Vazquez quit after the seventh round because of a broken nose.

In the second fight, the two outdid themselves. They went at it like raging rams, battering each other into bloody pulps, until, finally, Vazquez, 42-4 (31), dropped Marquez with a left hook in the sixth, and followed up with a brutal barrage that forced referee **Guadalupe Garcia** to stop the fight at the 1:16 mark.

What fight fan wouldn't want another a taste of that?

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSS/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Klitschko and Ibragimov in February fight at MSG

Listen Up

Rising Philadelphia-based heavyweight **Eddie Chambers** will make his HBO debut when he meets **Alexander Povetkin**, 14-0 (11), on January 26, in Berlin, Germany. Chambers, 30-0 (16), looked impressive in beating **Calvin Brock** in November, while Povetkin, the 2004 Olympic super heavyweight gold medalist, stopped **Chris Byrd** in late-October. The Chambers-Povetkin winner is supposed to get the winner of Klitschko-Ibragimov ... WBA bantamweight titlist **Wladimir Sidorenko**, rated third by THE RING, will face **Nobuto Ikehara**, 27-1 (19), on January 10 at the Prefectural Gym in Osaka, Japan. Sidorenko, 20-0-2 (7), is coming off a seventh-round stoppage of **Jerome Arnould** in June. The Ikehara fight will mark only the fourth time Sidorenko, a Germany-based Ukrainian, has fought outside of Germany. Sidorenko-Ikehara will be on the undercard of another bantamweight showdown, between THE RING's number-one contender, **Hozumi Hasegawa**, and number-eight **Simone Maludrottu**. Neither Hasegawa nor Maludrottu has lost since 2001 ... In an attempt to beef up the **Roy Jones-Felix Trinidad** show at Madison Square Garden, January 19 on HBO Pay-Per-View, promoter **Don King** has added **Cory Spinks** to the undercard in an IBF junior middleweight title defense against **Verno Phillips**. Spinks, 36-4 (11), is coming off a split-decision loss to then-middleweight world champion **Jermain Taylor** last May, while Phillips, 41-10-1 (21), will be coming off an 11-month absence from the ring. In his most recent bout, Phillips decisioned **Eduardo Sanchez** in February '07. ■

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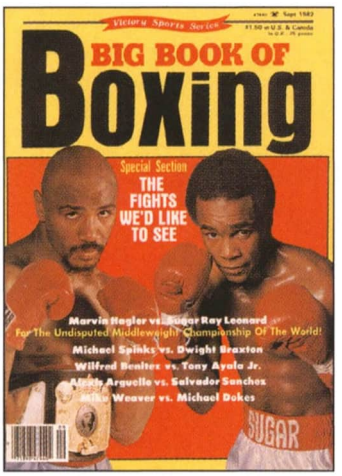

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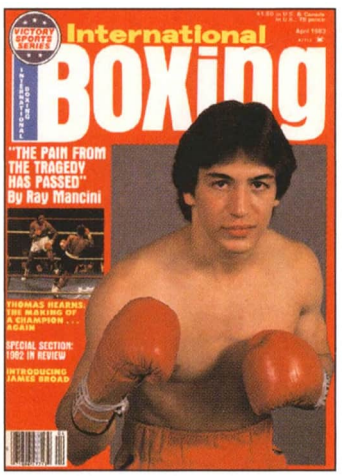

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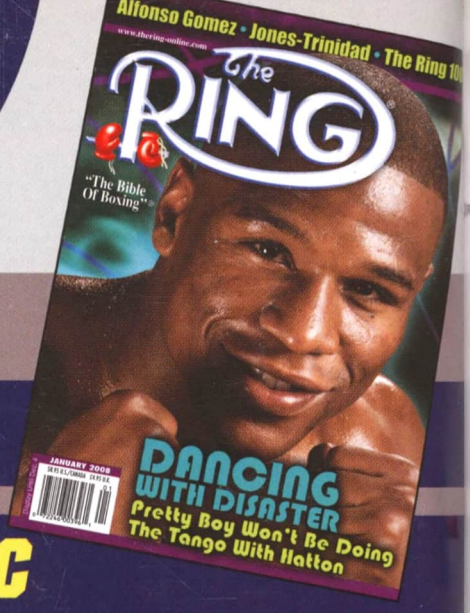

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